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# The Experiences of International Students in a Predominantly White American University

Lawrence Ejiofo

University of Nebraska at Lincoln, [ejiofolaw@yahoo.com](mailto:ejiofolaw@yahoo.com)

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THE EXPERIENCES OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN A  
PREDOMINANTLY WHITE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

By

Lawrence Olivia C. Ejiofo

A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of

The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska

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Under the Supervision of Professor Rachelle Winkle-Wagner

Lincoln, Nebraska

May, 2010

# THE EXPERIENCES OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN A PREDOMINANTLY WHITE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

Lawrence Olivia C. Ejiofo, M.A.

University of Nebraska, 2010

Adviser: Rachelle Winkle-Wagner

The events of September 11, 2001 ignoble acts by few individuals on students' visas in the United States have brought consequent restrictions of visas for international students into the United States institutions of higher education. These restrictions undoubtedly brought a fall in number of international students' applications to American higher educational institutions. The last few years have witnessed once again a growth in the number of international students that come to study in the United States. However, the events of the terrorists' attack have drastically influenced the ability of international students to integrate into American universities. As a result of this incident, many question the open acceptance, the safety, the security and the indeed the integration of international students in predominately American institutions. This thesis is an effort to discuss the experiences of international students in the post September 11, 2001, (9/11), era.

This qualitative study was conducted with eight international students from different countries in a predominantly white university in the Midwestern part of the United States. The participants were interviewed from a semi-structured questionnaire. From this interview three major themes were formed

namely: (a) Here is different; here is not home, (b) There are differences in culture; and (c) The strong effect of cultural differences. The experiences of the international students in a predominantly white university is an honest effort to expose the challenges of international students in the wake of 9/11 while giving suggestions on how international students can be helped to integrate better into white universities in order to insure greater persistence and success of students in the United States universities. The suggestions given in this work will help American higher educational institutions in the wake of global educational market to serve international students better.

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Most graciously dedicated to

All who ardently persist in yearning and searching for

Learning, Wisdom, and Truth



## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction and Statement of the Problem**

Coming from diversified cultures, international students have added to the beauty of American culture, political diversity, and economic work force. Lee and Rice (2007) stated that international students provide many benefits for the U. S universities by increasing the diversity of students' population, adding new perspectives to classroom conversations, increasing our awareness, and appreciation for other countries and cultures.

International students have become part of the student population of American higher educational institutions. There is hardly any institution of American higher education that does not have international students. According to Morinaka (2007), "the primary reason foreigners came to study, teach, and conduct research in the U.S. was worldwide recognition of the quality and reputation of U.S. higher education and its many institutions" (p.1). Thus, since 1784, the influx of international students into U. S higher educational institutions has comparatively been on the increase (Trice, 2003). The Institute of International education notes that "623,085 international students studied in the U.S in 2007/2008, up 7 percent compared to the previous year" (Institute of International Education, 2008). The new international students' enrolment for 2007/08 was 173,122 "which was 10% change from 2006/07 and 31% change from 2004/05" (Institute of International Education, 2008). These international students come from different cultural backgrounds, with differences in language, accent and skin color playing dominant roles in their ability to study in the United States. Many of these international students who come to study in the U. S find themselves in predominantly

white institutions where their differences are easily recognized. When these international students discover themselves in a new environment with clear differences, many of them may pass through a culture shock and some suffer from inferiority complex as a result of linguistic, social, or racial differences. Therefore, integration of international students will not only help them academically, but will as well enable them overcome social and psychological trauma.

After their educational career, many international students stay in the U.S. to work. These international “students and scholars who remained in the U.S. after completing their studies have made significant contributions to American society, and thus have served the U.S. well” (Morinaka, 2007, p.1). Lee and Rice (2007) noted:

Those who stay add to the intellectual capital of the U. S., and those that return home often do so with good will and affinity for their second home. Moreover, in the area of foreign policy the U. S and other nations’ institutions educate many of those who take leadership positions in other nations, which ultimately may benefit relations between countries (p.381).

Since international students benefit the universities where they study and the nation, and since the U. S institutions of higher education as well as the nation benefits from the presence of international students, it is necessary and important that these international students are helped to adapt to their environment as they come to U. S to study. Hence, the grand tour question of this study is: “How can international students be helped to integrate themselves fully in White universities?”

### **Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to listen to the experiences of international students in a predominantly white university in order to reveal the challenges, distrusters, and incapacitations they face in their university.

These challenges, which have been stated in the form of sub-questions, formed the basis for the semi-structured questionnaire for the interview. The sub-questions that informed the semi-structured questionnaire include:

1. What are the academic expectations of the international students in a white university?
2. What are the financial expectations of the international students in a white university?
3. What are the social expectations of international students in a white university?
4. How do the international students perceive their interactions with white students?
5. How do the international students perceive the overall concerns of white universities and students?

### **Significance of the study**

This research explored the experiences of international students in order to describe the challenges, plights, and difficulties of international students in a predominantly white university. This study will help other international students in other universities appreciate the challenges their counterparts face in predominantly white universities. This academic research will create awareness of the needs of international students. This study will also present white students and lecturers with some of the academic problems of the international students, who must adjust to different cultures, face personal issues, new educational systems, and cross-cultural problems involved in adjusting to new social norms (Abe, Talbot, & Geelhoed, 1998).

Similar to all other students, international students like to do well in their courses and graduate at the appropriate time. However, this desire may be jeopardized if the international students are not well integrated into the university system. Some factors that may challenge the proper integration of international students in their new environments, especially in predominantly white institutions, may include academic, financial, economic, social, and psychological factors. Proper integration of international students in predominantly white universities will enable international students to give their best to the universities where they study.

### **Procedures**

Based on my grand-tour question and five sub-questions, the interview/research questions were formulated. Each of the sub-questions became the basis of two or three research questions for the interviews. The demographic information that was needed from each interviewee and how their position was relevant to my interview are discussed in Appendix C.

My population and sample were eight international students of a predominantly white university in the Midwestern part of the United States. I chose to keep the name of this university anonymous because of confidentiality and the privacy of the university and protection of my participants. This sample of international students interviewed was between the ages of 20 and 50. The students that formed my sample belonged to different departments and disciplines, but are among the international students. The students chosen as interviewees came from different continents and countries. This is in order to give me a wide range of perspective from different departments and countries of the feelings or the perceptions of international students from different parts of the world. The

international students who served as the sample/population for this project were recruited through the help of the office of the international affairs department. I sent e-mails to the office of international affairs department detailing the type of people I needed to serve as my interviewees. The international affairs office then sent my mails to international students. Those students who fell into the category I needed were encouraged to contact me through e-mails and the phone. Through our onward communication and going to international students' organizations meetings to talk to them about the importance of serving as interviewees to my study, I was able to select those who had the experience needed to come forward for interview.

Since an in-depth knowledge of integration of international students was being sought, international students were hand selected. Where possible, many graduate students who do not have scholarships and assistantships were interviewed. It is only when international students share their experiences in a predominantly white university that efforts can be made to accommodate and integrate them properly into the white colleges. During the interview with the participants, however, I asked information rich participants to contact other potential participants. These interviews exposed how international students try to get integrated into the white colleges. This method of inquiry “is a process of understanding based on a distinct methodological tradition of inquiry that explores a social or human problem” and this is actually the purpose of this study (Creswell, 2007, p. 249). Thus, this study described “the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences...as they experience a phenomenon” describing what the participants have in common (Creswell, 2007, pp. 57-58)

The site of the interview was one of the halls of this predominantly white university. All the interviews were conducted in the school. Eight interviews were conducted in all. The interviews lasted for about 60 minutes. Each interview was audio taped and transcribed. The transcription was coded and from the coding, themes were generated. The transcribed interviews were used to gather quotes, ideas and background for the generated themes.

### **Definitions**

For the purpose of this paper, some of the key terms used in this study will be defined.

- International Students are defined as individuals who currently reside in U.S. and attend classes either as regular students or traditional students but are not citizens of the U. S. Thus, though these individuals may not have a student visa, they nonetheless take classes in American institutions of higher education.
- Predominantly white institutions/universities are defined as institutions and universities that have a white majority in their student population. This means that an institution is predominantly white if it is over 50% White.
- Integration is defined as the act of gathering individuals from different ethnicity, culture, language, and color with the purpose or aim of treating them as equals and creating equal opportunities for them without the feeling that a race or color is superior or inferior to the other. Integration means bringing diversity together such that each culture, tradition, and ethnicity feels accommodated.

Tinto (1975) defined integration as the “degrees of congruency between the individual and his social environment” (p. 107). It is the sufficient “interaction with others in the college” and sufficient “congruency with the prevailing value patterns of the college collectivity” (Tinto, 1975, p. 92). Tinto discussed two types of integration, the social and the academic, that help students persist in an institution of higher education. Social integration is the “interaction between the individual with given sets of characteristics (backgrounds, values, commitments, etc.) and other persons of varying characteristics within the college” (1975, p.107). Academic integration, on the other hand, becomes “the degree of congruency between the intellectual development of the individual and the prevailing intellectual climate of the institution” (Tinto, 1975, p.106). No wonder Tinto (2000) noted that “engagement in the community of the classroom can become a gateway for subsequent student involvement in the academic and social communities of the college generally” (p. 82). Thus, for a student to be fully integrated into an institution of higher education, Tinto argued that the individual has to be academically and socially incorporated into the institution. Both integrations are very important for student persistence and retention. Tinto (1975) made the point

A person can conceivably be integrated into the social sphere of the college and still drop out because of insufficient integration into the academic domain of the college (e.g., through poor grade performance). Conversely, a person may perform adequately in the academic domain and still drop out because of insufficient integration into the social life of the institution (e.g., through voluntary withdrawal) (p.92).

Thus, for the purpose of clarifications, Tinto’s definition of integration was mainly used in this paper as we study the experience of international study in a predominantly white university and their need to be integrated.

### **Verification strategies**

Internal and external validity were established so that my results would be transferable. Thus, experts were sought in verifying the data, such as an expert qualitative researcher who served as an advisor. This expert qualitative examiner looked over the purpose statement, grand tour question, and sub-questions. After examining them, changes were made. This expert went through the interview protocol and demographic sheet and again gave feedback to ensure good data.

Furthermore, at least eight international students in a predominantly white university were interviewed. Information was pulled not only from just a group of international students from one culture but rather international students from different socio-cultural, linguistic, and racial backgrounds. Information from different socio-cultural and racial backgrounds enabled diversified opinions as there were different international students from different backgrounds. These diversified opinions definitely provided numerous and rich description of the themes. My participants/interviewees were involved at each step of this research.

Member checking was an important part of this research. Transcripts were sent back to participants after the taped interviews were transcribed for them to read and approve as accurate presentation of their thoughts and perceptions. This exercise also enabled the participants to add anything they thought that might be relevant or be an excellent avenue for further information and/or clarification. The participants also had the opportunity to remove anything that did not reflect their thoughts, reflections or convictions. Reliability was established through verbatim transcriptions. This is because



it is one of the best ways to establish strong reliability. Each interview was transcribed verbatim, even the “ums” and “ahs.” These methods were employed in this research in order that the perceptions of the interviewees were correctly represented. Verification strategies will give strength and support to the research.

The aim of this work, exploring the experiences of international students, is to understand better the challenges of international students in a predominantly white academic institution of higher education. Hence, chapter 2 of this study will be a review literature. In this chapter, I will give the technical definitions of the term international students and trace the history of international students in the United States. I will also briefly discuss the status of international students with the event of September 11, 2001 terrorist activity. Recall that the individuals who carried out the act were on students’ (temporary) visas, hence, its importance to this project. Furthermore, this chapter will describe the experiences of international students in different institutions of higher learning which may include the experiences of American students on studies abroad. I will conclude this chapter with a brief review of integration and the diverse notions of integration among different scholars.

Chapter 3 will discuss the methodology used in this research work. It will explain the qualitative-phenomenological type of research since this paper will use a phenomenological-qualitative tools to study the challenges of international students in a predominantly white institution. Chapter 3 will also discuss the purpose statement, the research questions, the participants, the research site, data collection, data analysis, validation techniques and then the study significance.

Chapter 4 will treat the findings of the interviews. It will feature and introduce the participants and their experiences. Pseudonyms will be used to refer to the names of the participants and the name of the predominantly white university will not be mentioned. This is in order to protect the confidentiality and the integrity of the participants as well as insure their privacy. This chapter will define the themes of the findings.

Chapter 5 will concentrate on the discussions. It will compare the data found in chapter 4 with the literature review of chapter 2. Chapter 5 will also briefly give the summary of the findings and their implicit and explicit implications, thus stressing the need for the integration of international students in white colleges. This chapter will therefore give recommendations on how international students can be supported and helped to integrate into the white universities. It will also give suggestions as to where future researches can be conducted in order to increase and facilitate international students' adaptation and integration into the predominantly white colleges.

Simply stated, chapter 2 will be a review of literature; chapter 3 will study the methodology and research design; chapter 4 is the findings; and chapter 5 is the discussion.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

Although opinions differ as to the extent of literature review that is needed before a study begins, different authors in qualitative texts refer to the need to review literature so that one can provide the rationale for the problem and position one's study within the ongoing literature about the topic (Creswell, 2007, p. 103).

I, therefore, decided to review various literatures that discuss international students and students' retention. This was to show the importance of international students' integration into predominantly white universities and to discover how these intercontinental students could be helped to integrate into the system and culture that these transnational students found to be supposedly new to them. This chapter divided into three sections will:

- a) Give the technical definitions of the term international students and trace their history.
- b) Discuss the status of international students with the event of 9/11.
- c) Discuss the experiences found in some researches on international students in higher educational institutions.
- d) Conclude with the brief review of integration and notions of integration among scholars.

### **International Students and their History**

According to Skinner (2002) international students, also referred to as foreign students, are "students from abroad who are enrolled for courses at American schools,

colleges, or universities and admitted under a temporary visa” (p. 1310). Shenoy (2002) on the other hand, maintained that international students include students who are citizens or permanent residents of a country other than that in which they intend to study. These students have legal residence outside the country that they intend to study in and or propose to be in the host country solely for educational purposes on a temporary student visa (p. 1314). The United States today prefers to use the term international students rather than foreign students “to describe individuals who fit this description” (Shenoy, 2002, p. 1315). I would use international, foreign, transnational, and intercontinental to describe these students who are not permanent residents but are registered students of the predominantly white university.

Trice (2003) narrated that international students came to American around 1784 and “by 1946, 15,000 were studying here” (Jenkins, 1983; Trice, 2003). After World War II, the number of international students skyrocketed, and by 1954 there were 34,000, by 1974 there were 155,000 international students, and in 2000, over half a million were studying in the United States (Davis, 2000; Trice, 2003). Skinner (2002) asserted that “more international students pass through America’s doors than those of any other country, making the United States the world’s most sought-after and diverse educational region in the world” (p. 1310). The number of international students in American institutions of higher education was increasing in a steady progressive method before the event of September 11, 2001, often referred to as 9/11. Some of the individuals that performed the 9/11 episode were on students’ visas. This singular event of September 11 has remained a wound too hard to heal on the American international policy that invariably has affected international students.

### **Status of International Students in and after the Event of 9/11**

Discussing the status of international students before and after the event of 9/11,

NAFSA: Association of International Educators (2008) notes:

Until this century, the United States enjoyed the status of destination of choice for the world's international students and scholars, and we reaped great benefits from this status: the opportunity to educate the world's future leaders; the ability to attract the world's best talent to our universities and research institutes; the educational benefits that our students derived from foreign professors and from having other cultures represented on campus; and billions of dollars of spending in our economy (p.4).

American society and educational institutions have enjoyed the presence of international students. The total openness of the American government in the acceptance of peoples of different cultures of the world could be seen in the number of international students that were admitted into the American universities and other institutions of higher learning each year. However, the action of 9/11 affected the number of international students who came to study in America. Hence, NAFSA: Association of International Educators recounted in the quoted statement above what the American society and educational institutions had enjoyed. It is not as if the United States and institutions of higher education are no longer enjoying these favors, rights, and opportunities of the past, the simple fact is that NAFSA: Association of International Educators are writing and referring to the implication and effect of the 9/11 episode. One of the immediate effects of 9/11 was the drop in the number of international students that come to the United States for transnational study. Bollag (2004) discussed of “visa restrictions imposed on foreign students and scholars since the September 11 attacks” as one of the immediate effects of the influence of 9/11 (Bollag, 2004, p. A37).

Furthermore, the annual report on international academic mobility published by the Institute of International Education (IIE) reports that there was about a 2.4% decrease in the number of international students' enrollments in the years following the terrorist attack. According to the Open Doors 2004, this drop in enrollments is the first absolute decline in foreign enrollments since 1971/72 (Enrollment figures from the Institute of International Education's Open Doors 2004 report). That the population of the international students in the United States is dropping has its own concomitant effect. Many Americans and the institutions of higher education feel that the United States competitiveness for foreign students have fallen due to the anti-foreign attitudes and the tragic terrorist action performed by the terrorists, some of them had students' visas and purported themselves as international students. These actions have affected the decrease in number of foreign students in American institutions of higher educations. Thus, recounting one of the effects of 9/11 on international students and on American government openness to international students, NAFSA: Association of International Educators (2008) also argued:

Although the United States still enrolls the largest number of international students simply because we have the largest higher education sector, by any relative measure U.S. competitiveness for international students has collapsed in this century as a result of ... the unwelcoming environment created by post-9/11 security measures and anti-foreign attitudes... International student enrollment in U.S. colleges and universities fell after 9/11 and stood at 582,984 in the academic year 2006-07; it would be well over 700,000—some 25 percent higher—if pre-9/11 growth rates had continued (p. 5).

These statements bring out clearly the feelings of American people towards the effects of 9/11. This was because some of the perpetrators of the actions of 9/11 were on students' visas. They were supposedly accepted into their respective institutions as international

students. It may not be denied that though international students still come into the American higher institutions of learning, the impact of the terrorist attack have affected the number of enrollments of international students that come to study in American higher education institutions. Bollag (2004) analyzed this situation by stating that the drop in international students is the first decline in 32 years.

Though the terrorist attack affected and still affects the number of international students' enrollment, many American people call on the government to continue to allow international students into the American higher education because of the economic gains. It is estimated that about \$12 billion (twelve billion dollars) are generated by the international students who come to study in the United States from their tuition and living expenses. Shenoy (2002) testified to this estimation. She articulated it in her records:

The U.S. Department of Commerce recognizes education and training as the fifth largest export of the United States and formally classifies it as an industry. During the 1998-1999 academic year, 490,933 international students studied in the United States and they brought almost \$11.7 billion into the economy. During the 1999-2000 academic year, 514,723 international students were studying in the United States and they brought \$12.3 billion into the economy, through expenditure on tuition and living expenses (p. 1314).

Skinner (2002) in the same view noted that more than two-thirds of all international students in the United States received their primary source of support from non-U.S. sources. Thus, despite the terrorist attack of 9/11, the presence of foreign students is important to the United States because of economic, cultural, academic, and other different perspectives international students bring to the United States. NAFSA: Associations of International Educators (2008) noted the importance of international students in the United States and excitedly commented on its rise after the 9/11 episode. It stated, "only now is international student enrollment in U.S. colleges and universities

returning to the level of five years ago, and we are still far from the robust growth curve that we enjoyed before 9/11” (p.5).

While Morinaka (2007) saw the great number of influx in quest of American higher education as a result of worldwide recognition and reputation of America’s higher education and its institutions, Woo (2006) thought otherwise. In his article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Woo (2006) compared the U. S. experience of only a 17 percent gain in the foreign market “with gains of 29 percent in Britain, 42 percent in Australia, 46 percent in Germany, 81 percent in France and the 108 percent in Japan” (Woo, 2006). This quantitative study seriously questions the veracity of Morinaka’s statement. Nevertheless, it is generally argued that the United States has offered higher education to the highest number of international students more than any other country of the world (NAFSA: Association of International Educators, 2008; Skinner, 2002).

The truth of the matter, however, is that as a result of the global educational competition coupled with the effects of visa restrictions of international students into the United States, intercontinental students in the events of 9/11 have been thriving in other countries of the world (NAFSA, 2008; Woo, 2006). Nevertheless, transnational students in the United States and other countries have expressed their experiences in encountering cultures foreign to them. It is important to have a brief overview of studies on international and study abroad students as they share their experiences in their respective institutions of higher education.

### **The experiences of international students in higher educational institutions**

There have been studies on the experiences of some different cultural and racial international students like the African and Asian international students. However, there is



not a whole lot of research on the experiences of international students in the United States higher educational institutions. I have, therefore, undertaken to review some literature on the experiences of students in other countries outside of the United States. The system of going abroad or overseas to study is referred to as “study abroad program.” I have decided to study the experiences of transnational students studying abroad because of the similarities of experiences that go with being outside one’s ethnic, racial and linguistic boundaries. According to Kitsantas (2004), study abroad program is defined by as “all educational programs that take place outside the geographical boundaries of the country of origin...” (p. 2). Qualitative studies by researchers including the study of 232 abroad college students by Kitsantas (2004) have given evidence to the fact that study abroad program among students enhances their “worldview, global perspective, cross-cultural effectiveness, interest in travel, art, foreign languages, history and architecture, and increase reflective thought, self reliance, self confidence and personal well being” (Kitsantas, 2004, p. 2). Because the studies in study abroad students share some similarities of experiences among foreign students in the United States institutions of higher education; I have decided to include some of their studies as part of the literature review on international students.

Hanassab (2006) discusses the prejudice and discrimination that international students face as a result of biases and negative perceptions of these individuals in a bigger society where they form the minority. He describes the qualitative work done on seven groups of people making up a total number of “640 international students” enrolled in University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). These groups of people included students from different geographical regions of Africa, Americas, Asia, Europe, the

Middle East, Oceania, and Southeast Asia. The findings suggested that students from the Middle East and Africa experienced higher overall discrimination than the international students from the other parts of the world. 21 percent of students from Southeast Asia and 17 percent of students from Africa and 16 percent Asians experienced discrimination more than other students from other regions when interacting with their professors. 19 percent of Asian students more than people from other parts of the world noted that they experienced discrimination interacting with the university staff. While 8 percent of students from Europe experienced discrimination when interacting with their classmates, 22 percent of Middle East students noted that they suffered discrimination from their classmates. Furthermore, in applying for jobs, 17 percent of students from Africa and Middle East respectively “experienced the highest discrimination when applying for jobs. Students from Europe and Oceania experienced the least discrimination” (p. 164).

Galloway and Jenkins (2005) conducted a survey on the adjustment problems faced by international students in two States in the United States, Texas, and California. The survey was to be a comparison of international students and administrative perceptions at two private religiously affiliated universities. 215 international students and 44 faculty members returned their surveys for studies. According to Galloway and Jenkins (2004), this was a response rate of 52 and 63 percent respectively. The mean adjustment score of the study ranked the three biggest problems for international students in their order of magnitude as financial aid, placement services, and the English language. When the scores of the faculty and the administrators were published and compared, it was discovered that the faculty and the administrators “overestimated the extent of the problems the international students were facing” except in one area, financial aid (p.

181). However, this study seems to be contrary to the discovery of the Australian study carried out by Robertson, Line, Jones and Thomas (2000).

Robertson et al. used the Delphi study and technique “developed in the 1950 by the “RAND Corporation” as a strategy for complex problem solving that relies on iterative feedback to obtain consensus and statistical summaries” (p.91). Thus, unlike the popular version of survey questionnaires where individuals are limited to choices available in each item for their judgments, “all judgments using the Delphi technique are made by the participant” (Robertson et al. p. 91). In this study, Robertson et al, (2000) carried out a study from the responses from 38 international students and 31 members on the staff; it was discovered that language topped the list among the problems encountered by international students, followed by tuition cost and then isolation or discrimination. One wonders if the differences in the ranking of international students’ problems may be because of the different places the researches were conducted or due to the differences in time lapse. It was five years after the Australian study that the Galloway and Jenkins study in the United States happened. There may be also questions as to whether the differences in the method of study, qualitative and Delphi method, contributed to the differences in results.

Another qualitative study was carried out by Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland, and Ramia (2008) in Australia. In the research underlying the study, Sawir interviewed “200 international students from more than 30 different nations, at nine Australian institutions...on the social and economic security of international students” (Sawir et al., 2008, p. 150). In the series of the questions asked, all the international students were asked if they had experienced “loneliness or isolation” (Sawir et al., 2008, p. 151). The

huge positive answer given by 130 international students to the question on loneliness and isolation brought about the study of the group on international students and loneliness in Australia. Some of those who responded that they felt so lonely reasoned that they found Australia as a “very strange place” taking them a “very long to adapt” (Sawir et al., 2008, p. 160). One of the participants noted that loneliness seem to be the “biggest problems most international students face” that it “gets to the point of depression” (Sawir et al., 2008, p. 168). This statement proves one point. None of the problems of international students is so small to be underrated. Whether it is the language barrier problem or the financial problem or loneliness or discrimination, they are all as important as other problems. Hence, the importance of this study that seeks to relate the experiences of international students as each of the challenges of the international students is an ordeal to be addressed.

Research and studies on international students have revealed some of these challenges because the problems and challenges of international students are as numerous as there are international students from different backgrounds and racial origins. The experiences of financial aids, language, discrimination, and loneliness are only parts of the numerous difficulties that confront international students. International students face cultural, social, psychological, and even religious challenges as a result of differences in language, culture and religious orientation as well as racial and tribal disparities. Furthermore, the different methods and models used to study the tensions that international students face in their host country may have also aided in the production of different result and interests as discovered in some of the studies discussed above. It is therefore certain that a lot has not been done to unravel all the challenges of the

international students as there are many obscure, intricate, and complex difficulties confronting them. The attempt of this research paper is to expose as much as possible some of these and other challenges confronting international students in a predominantly white university through the phenomenological qualitative analysis and then propose suggestions on how the students in such predicaments and difficulty can be helped.

Furthermore, Toyokawa and Toyokawa (2002) carried a survey “to explore the relation between the level of engagement in extracurricular activities of Japanese students studying in the United States and the students’ academic involvement, psychological health, social support from friends and the active use of leisure time” (p. 366). The participants involved in the study were 85 Japanese students and the data used for the study came from the survey conducted in November 1998, “for an administrative purpose” (p. 369). However, as a result of missing data, one of the student’s responses was excluded. The result of the survey showed that “those students who were more engaged in extracurricular activities reported higher scores on satisfaction with life in general in the host country than those student who were not as engaged” (p. 373). This shows the importance of integration of international students into their host universities. This will enhance the persistence and success of international students in their respective universities.

### **International Students and Integration**

To study in American higher educational institution as an international student is very costly and expensive especially when the international student does not have an assistantship or a scholarship (Shenoy, 2002; Skinner, 2002). However, despite the exorbitant amount spent by the international students who come to study in American

educational institutions, a number of researchers agree that many international students encounter numerous challenges and difficulties in predominantly white universities unlike their counterparts, the domestic students of the same university (Eimers & Pike, 1997; Hanassab, 2006; Forbes-Mewett & Nyland, 2008; Grayson, 2008; and Trice, 2003). Forbes-Mewett and Nyland (2008) argue that international students encounter difficulties seldom experienced by domestic students that relate to academic and social aspects of their stay in the host country. Nonetheless, international students needed to adjust as part of the social minority. From the qualitative study conducted on 55 interviewees, some of whom were international students from Monash University in Australia, Forbes-Mewett & Nyland (2008) who were studying security issues as they concern international students argued:

Not only do international students need to adapt to a foreign education system and a foreign language and culture, like migrants, they also need to adjust to being part of the social minority; that is, they encounter difficulties associated with being different” (Forbes-Mewett and Nyland, 2008, p. 185).

This statement seems apt for international students as they come from different cultures, languages, and social backgrounds to study in American higher educational institutions. As a result of the accumulated differences that presumably go with international students, sometimes, it is hard for them to get adapted into their “new environment,” the American higher educational institutions. Against this back drop Grayson (2008) argues that international students experienced difficulties due to the fact that they are not integrated into many aspects of campus life and therefore receive relatively little social support. He comments that “research in Canada and the United States show that in addition to the usual problems of adjustment to university,

international students must face the difficulties associated with coming to a new country” (Grayson, 2008, p. 3). He enumerated problems such as “loneliness, homesickness, depression, arrival confusion, the maintenance of self esteem, somatic complaints, family problems or the loss of loved ones, time pressure, adjustment to food and climate, finances, stress, language problems, difficulty in making friends, and employment” (Grayson, 2008, p. 217). Grayson (2008) carried out a survey involving 1,415 domestic and international students who were entering four of the Canadian universities of the University of British Columbia (UBC), York University, McGill University, and the Dalhousie University in the fall of 2003. These students completed questionnaires and the study reveals that international students “are as involved as in campus activities as domestic students; however, they lack the social support enjoyed by domestic students” (Grayson, 2008, p. 216). Hence, Grayson (2008) maintains that integration affects retention and success in the higher educational institutions. This statement about integration has been the crux of students’ retention and success in higher educational institutions.

The question of students’ retention in institutions of higher education has become topical ever since it was discussed by higher education scholar, Vincent Tinto (1975). Though Tinto did not discuss retention just from the perspective of international students or as it concerned just international students, he discussed retention as it concerned students’ retention rates, graduation and withdrawal rates without making distinctions. Baird (2000) argues that Tinto’s model of “students departure is one of the most studied in the field of higher education, and it may be one of the most studied in social science” (Baird, 2000, p. 62).

Tinto's (1975) model on students' retention appeared in a researched article "Dropout from Higher Education: A Theoretical Synthesis of Recent Research." Tinto's research argues that for students to persist in institutions of higher education, they have to be academically and socially integrated into the culture of the college. Tinto (1975) remarked that "this paper attempts to formulate a theoretical model that explains the processes of interaction between the individual and the institution that lead differing individuals to drop out from institutions of higher education" (p. 90). Tinto's theoretical model of students' dropout was developed and based on Durkheim's theory of suicide. Tinto (1975) makes clear the foundation on which he builds his theory. He states that "the theoretical model to be developed in the following sections has its roots in Durkheim's theory of suicide as it is currently modified by works in social psychology regarding individual suicide" (p.91). According to Durkheim (1961), suicide is more likely to occur when individuals are insufficiently integrated into the fabric of society. In his theory, Durkheim studied the rate of suicide among different Christian religious sects, Catholic and Protestants, and came to the conclusion that Protestants committed more suicide than their Catholic counterparts because they were not fully connected and integrated to one another in their respective Christian sect. Spady (1970), however, was the first to apply Durkheim's theory of suicide to dropouts in higher educational institutions. Interpreting the mind of Spady (1970), Eimers & Pike (1997) argue that the behavior of students can be likened to the behavior of those who contemplate suicide:

The behaviors of students who drop out are analogous to the behaviors of those who contemplate suicide. That is, individuals considering suicide choose to withdraw from society because they lack shared values and normative support. Similarly, students persist or withdraw from college depending on their social and intellectual experiences within the college community (Eimers and Pike, 1997, p.78).



Though Spady (1970) was the first to apply Durkheim's theory of suicide to dropouts in higher educational institutions, Tinto (1975) expanded on Spady's application of Durkheim's theory. In his researched work, Tinto (1975) argues:

When one views the college as a social system with its own value and social structures, one can treat dropout from that social system in a manner analogous to that of suicide in the wider society. One can reasonably expect, then, that social conditions affecting dropout from the social system of the college would resemble those resulting in suicide in the wider society; namely, insufficient interactions with others in the college and insufficient congruency with the prevailing value patterns of the college collectivity (p.91).

This statement marks the crux of Tinto's study of student's dropout using Durkheim's study on suicide as his base. Tinto (1975) formulated the theoretical model stating that student retention and persistence in institutions of higher education must require the student to be integrated into the institution. He distinguished between two types of integration, the academic and social integration. Academic integration is "the degree of congruency between the intellectual development of the individual and the prevailing intellectual climate of the institution" (Tinto, 1975, p.106); while social integration deals with the "interaction between the individual with given sets of characteristics (backgrounds, values, commitments, etc.) and other persons of varying characteristics within the college" (Tinto, 1975, p.107). In order to be fully integrated into the higher educational society and culture, a student has to integrate socially and academically into the university "society." Tinto (1975) reasons that integration would be incomplete and not guarantee the student's retention or success in the university if any of the two aspects of integration is missing. Tinto (1975) remarks:

A person can conceivably be integrated into the social sphere of the college and still drop out because of insufficient integration into the academic domain of the college (e.g., through poor grade performance). Conversely, a person may perform adequately in the academic domain and still drop out because of insufficient integration into the social life of the institution (e.g., through voluntary withdrawal) (p.92).

Many researchers accepted Tinto's model and the two distinctive methods of integration he propounded. Kraemer (1997) and Nora (1993) accepting academic integration define it as "the development of a strong affiliation with the college academic environment both in the classroom and outside the class" (Kraemer, 1997, p. 163; Nora, 1993, p. 235). Kraemer (1997) and Nora (1993) argue that academic integration included interactions of academic nature with faculty, academic staff, and peers, while social integration involves the "development of a strong affiliation with the college social environment both in the classroom and outside the class" (Kraemer, 1997, p. 163; Nora, 1993, p. 237). The duo, however, agree that interactions of social nature with faculty, academic staff, and peer interactions, informal contact with faculty, and involvement in organizations constitute social integration.

Kraemer (1997), however, later reported that "recently, the validity of the Tinto (1987) model, which has been used as a conceptual framework for persistence studies for almost twenty years, has been called into question because it was developed for a traditional college population" (p. 164). Other critics of Tinto maintained that Tinto's (1975) model did not apply to international students. Kraemer (1997) cites Tierney (1992) who criticized Tinto's model and asserted instead that ethnic and racial minority students (particularly Native Americans) withdrew from college because they were required to adapt to an environment defined by the dominant culture. Kraemer (1997) argues that "they [the Native Americans and the racial minority students] must adapt as

individuals rather than as a group, which violates their cultural orientation” (p. 164).

Thus, Tierney (1992) becomes one of the strongest critics of Tinto’s integration model.

Tierney (1992) shows his disapproval of Tinto’s theoretical model which sees social and academic integration as the necessary conditions for student retention and graduation. In the educational attack of Tinto’s formulations, Tierney (1992) writes:

I take issues with Tinto’s widely accepted theoretical model that views college participation as if it were a ‘rite of passage’ where academic and social integration is essential for student persistence. First, I argue that Tinto has misrepresented the anthropological notions of ritual, and in doing so he has created a theoretical construct with practical implications that hold potentially harmful consequences for racial and ethnic minorities. I critique the epistemological argument Tinto has articulated – that of social integration –from a cultural perspective informed by critical theory (p. 603).

Taking the social constructionist view of reality, Tierney (1992) highlights the practical implication of Tinto’s views. Tierney (1992) suggests that instead of thinking of “student participation from a social integrationist perspective, an alternative perspective is to conceive of universities as multicultural entities where difference is highlighted and celebrated” (p. 604). Using the statistics and study of American Indians drop out of higher education, Tierney (1992) accused Tinto of developing “a theoretical model that takes into account the individualistic pieces of information” and that Tinto did this in a manner that is comprehensive rather than pluralistic (p. 604). Critically criticizing Tinto, Tierney (1992) writes;

Tinto has sought to explain why students leave college by calling upon a framework that incorporates factors such as family income or student background. He has utilized such information not as ends in themselves but to develop a general theory of student participation as opposed to an individualistic analysis of why one or another student is likely to attend and eventually graduate (p. 605)

In his anthropological analysis of Tinto's model, Tierney (1992) observes that Tinto misrepresented Van Gennep's use of the term "ritual" which Gennep described as a rite of passage that designed to move individuals from one developmental stage to another (p. 606 -607). Tierney (1992) reasoned that "when Van Gennep developed his functionalist theory, he never anticipated that it would be used to explain one culture's ritual to initiate a member of another culture" (Tierney, 1992, p. 608). He, therefore, criticizes Tinto's use of the word "ritual" in his integration model in these words and categorizes Tinto as a socialist integrationist. He critically observes,

The first problem, then, with social integrationist theory is that it borrows an anthropological term –ritual –yet extracts the term from its cultural foundation. One cannot speak of ritual without first considering the cultural contexts in which that ritual is embedded. In the case of American higher education we find that colleges and universities reflect the culture of the dominant society. In America, that dominant society is white (Tierney, 1992, p. 608).

Furthermore, Tierney (1992) criticizes Tinto's conceptualization of college-going at the individualistic level rather than a collective one.

From a social integrationist perspective individuals attend college, become integrated or not, graduate or depart. Conformity is the norm and it is the responsibility of the individual...Social integrationists assume that culture exists at a meta level –all cultures are similar and the institution merely reflects the culture of society...From an anthropological standpoint to emphasize 'individual' at the expense of the 'group' or the 'culture' is backwards (p.610).

Tierney (2000) notes that Tinto's model calls upon individualistic theoretical notions such as the idea of suicide proposed by Durkheim while the focus of attention is the individual who commits the suicide (or drops out) and not the culture that makes such acts possible or interprets them in a particular manner (p. 215). Tierney's (1992) criticism is a very strong critique of Tinto's integration model. However, Tierney underscores the

fact that Tinto's contribution to education cannot be over-emphasized. He explained that his critique of Tinto's model is to help task researcher to arrive to a better model.

I am arguing, then for a radical reorientation of how we conceptualize and, hence, act in the organizational worlds of academe...In doing so, we will be moving away from a model of social integration and assimilation and toward a framework of emancipation and empowerment (Tierney, 1992, p.616).

Tierney (2000) further explains that it is only through critical analysis of theories that researchers can arrive at a better, true, formidable and proven theory. He maintains that in the past, "researchers have suggested that students need to be integrated into the fabric of the institution that both academic and social integration needs to take place" (Tierney, 2000, p. 219). He advocates therefore:

We ought to view college as a ritualistic transition point from one stage to another. In large part the onus in such a model is on the individual...What I am suggesting is that we turn the model on its head –that we develop a framework which has the negotiation of identity in academe as central to educational success...Rather than a model that assumes that students must fit into what is often an alien culture and that they leave their own cultures, I argue the opposite (Tierney, 2000, p. 219).

Tierney was not the only researcher to criticize Tinto's model. Some other researchers found it hard to situate and see the relevance and congruency of Tinto's model within their own academic perspective. Braxton, Sullivan, and Johnson, (1997) and Braxton, Milem, and Sullivan, (2000), were among the group that criticized Tinto's model. Actually, Braxton, Sullivan, and Johnson (1997), recently assessed the extent and degree of empirical support for each of the thirteen primary propositions postulated in Tinto's 1975 foundational theory. In making these assessments, both multi-institutional and single-institutional tests of these propositions were used. Empirical tests robustly support only five of the thirteen primary propositions. Actually, four of these propositions

are logically interrelated and received strong empirical backing by multi institutional tests, whereas single-institutional appraisals provide strong empirical affirmation for five propositions. As a consequence, Braxton et al. (1997) conclude that Tinto's theory is partially supported and lacks empirical internal consistency. Braxton et al. (2000) remark that "these empirical backed propositions leave social integration unexplained" (p. 570). Braxton & Lien (2000) note that "Tinto's interactionalist theory of college student departure needs a revision" (p. 11) whereas Braxton, et al. (2000) advocate theory elaboration. This "theory elaboration affords one approach to the development of explanations for social integration and the revision of Tinto's theory" (Braxton, 2000, p. 4; Braxton, Milem, & Sullivan, 2000, p. 570). It also entails "the application of new concepts borrowed from other theoretical perspective to explain the focal phenomena" (Braxton, 2000, p. 4; Braxton, Milem, & Sullivan, 2000, p. 570).

Braxton et al. (2000) name other concepts like institutional type, organizational attribute, motivations for attending college, financial aid, fulfillment of expectations for college, sense of community in residence halls, student involvement, life task predominance, and self efficacy derived from the other theoretical perspective given empirical treatment to understand both social integration and student departure decisions. Thus, Braxton et al. (2000) differ from Tinto (1997) in his explanation of integration theory. While Tinto (1997) remarks that if social integration were to occur, it must occur in the classroom, Braxton et al. (2000), on the other hand, rather argue that "active learning should not be confused with academic integration, a construct of Tinto's 1975 foundational theory of college student departure" (p. 571). Braxton et al. (2000) contend that active learning is any class activity that involves students in doing things and

thinking about the things they are doing. They explain that “active learning activities include discussion, questions faculty ask students in class, cooperative learning, debates, role playing, and the questions faculty ask on course examinations” (Braxton et al., 2000, p. 571). Thus, for Braxton et al. (2000), active learning is conceptually distinct from academic integration, for active learning and other classroom-based experiences are antecedents of academic integration. Braxton et al. (2000), therefore, conclude:

Active learning and other classroom activities constitute sources of influence on academic integration. Typical approaches to measuring academic integration further illustrate this distinction. Academic integration typically has been operationally defined and measured as a student’s estimation of their academic and intellectual development, grade point average and student perception of faculty concern for teaching and student development (p. 571).

This explanation sharply differs from Tinto’s understanding of academic integration.

What Tinto explained as academic integration is understood as active learning by Braxton even though Braxton acknowledged that active learning give rise to academic integration.

Braxton et al. (2000) clarify:

Typical measures of academic integration suggest that active learning and other classroom-based teaching practices are sources of influence (antecedents) on academic integration and should not be viewed as interchangeable with academic integration (p. 571).

Braxton et al (2000) recommend that future efforts to revise Tinto’s 1975 foundational theory through theory elaboration should include not only measures of active learning, but also other dimensions of faculty teaching role performance that might facilitate social integration, subsequent institutional commitment, and student persistence (p. 582).

In studying Tinto’s persistence model, which Tinto (1993) also called “interactional system” (p. 136), Rendon, Jalomo and Nora (2000) came up with their

critique of Tinto's integration model. These three researchers studied Tinto's basic premise that social and academic integration is essential to student retention and agreed to it. Thus, they acknowledged that "Tinto's model (especially the 1975 & 1987 versions) has certainly provided a workable and testable foundation for analyzing the multiple factors involved with student departure, particularly employing quantitative methods" (Rendon, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000, p. 127). Rendon et al. (2000) accepted the statements of the quantitative researchers, Nora and Cabrera (1996) that there is sufficient empirical evidence establishing the validity of Tinto's (1975 & 1987) model of student persistence. They, nevertheless, acknowledged that Braxton, Sullivan and Johnsons (1997) criticism of the assessment of Tinto's theory of 1975 version on the grounds that the assessment of empirical evidence regarding thirteen propositions postulated by Tinto were only partially supported when Braxton et al. (1997) tested them. They also accepted the questions and the objections by Kraemer (1997) and Tierney (1992) "on the validity of Tinto's model to fully and appropriately capture the experiences of nonwhite students, given that the model is based on an assimilation/acculturation framework" (p. 128). Rendon et al. (2000), however, could not connect the relationship between Tinto's interactionalist theory and the assimilation/acculturation perspective. They contend that the key to the interactionalist view is that persistence is contingent on the extent to which the students have become incorporated (integrated) into the social and academic communities of the college.

Interactionalist theory is concerned with the impact of person-and institution-related characteristics on a particular phenomenon...in which both students and institutions through social and education communities, are overtime, continually interacting with one another in a variety of formal and informal situations (Rendon et al., 2000, p. 128)



Assimilation was understood as a process of separation and cultural adaptation that require minorities to break away from their traditions, customs, values, languages, and cultures in order to find full membership and acceptance in the predominately white American culture. Time was in the 1960's when some social scientists taught that minority individual could avoid societal alienation by becoming fully absorbed in the predominant culture. However, the 1970 and 1980 critics repudiate the perspective that sees assimilation as an absorption into the predominant culture as problematic because minority group norms and cultural patterns become deviant, self destructive, and inferior when compared to majority cultures.

Thus, along this line of new understanding, Rendon et al. (2000), implicitly maintain that interactional retention theory adheres to some of the basic premises of the acculturation/assimilation framework, such as separation and incorporation. They argue that several researchers have challenged the way these processes have been conceptualized in relation to explaining minority student retention in college in particular, the assumption that minority students must separate from their cultural realities and take the responsibility to become incorporated into colleges' academic and social fabric in order to succeed. Rendon et al., (2000) agree that there is little or no concern to address systemic problems within institutions or the notion that minority students should be able to operate in multiple contexts. This is "the central to the critique of Tinto's student departure model" (Rendon et al., 2000, p.129).

As a result of these minutiae and details, Rendon et al. (2000) testify, "we believe that revisionist models and theory are needed. Also needed are new models that consider the key theoretical issues associated with the experiences of minority students in higher

education” (p. 129). Rendon et al. (2000) advocate that their main concern is not whether Tinto’s theory works for minority students; “rather, the emphasis is on the kind of theoretical foundation and methodological approaches that are needed to more fully understand and facilitate the retention process for minority students in an increasingly complex and multiracial institutional environment” (p. 131). They, therefore, argue that Tinto’s integration and retention model theory should be improved and raised to a higher level of theoretical development instead of being discarded:

Tinto’s college student retention theory needs to be taken to a higher level of theoretical development... We believe that with all that is now known about student retention, it is quite possible that a totally new theory is needed to take Tinto’s theory to a new level. Moreover, knowledge from disciplines other than education can also be used to develop new theoretical perspectives regarding student retention (pp. 148-149).

Rendon et al. (2000) further observed that studies carried out by both quantitative and qualitative researchers that have employed Tinto’s (1975; 1987) models have conceptually and theoretically advanced and developed some of the facts and interrelationships postulated by Tinto. These have also invariably given some support to Tinto’s proposition; but they advocated that the Tinto’s theory has to be taken further to include race, class and gender and that the theoretical issues regarding separation, transition and incorporation presented are targeted to provide avenues for conducting future research meant to challenge intellectual discussion, theory and research.

While traditional theories of student retention and involvement have been useful in providing a foundation for the study of persistence, they need to be taken further, as much more work needs to be done to cover race, class, and gender issues (among others) that impact retention for diverse students in diverse institution. Certainly the theoretical issues regarding separation, transition and incorporation presented... are intended to go beyond stirring intellectual discussion that will lift theory and research (p. 151).

Though Tinto's integration theory has been a big boost in studying the reason students drop out of college; it may not be the perfect model. Thus, despite the critiques and criticisms of Tinto's integration model, his (Tinto's) model still remains the practicable theory that studies students' retention and integration. Though Tinto's retention theory may not have all the answers, it has continued to remain the most studied in the field of higher education and one of the most studied in social science (Baird, 2000, p. 62). Braxton et al. (1997, 2000) acknowledge that Tinto's model has enjoyed near paradigmatic stature in the study of college student departure such that more than 400 citations and 170 dissertations are related to this theory. Certainly more citations and dissertations must have been written on Tinto's model since this is 10 years Braxton et al. (1997, 2000) made their assertion. Tierney (1992), one of the strong critics of Tinto's model, notes that in taking issues with Tinto's notion, he was not trying to paint the hero a villain but that he was rather seeking to "provoke dialogue" by taking issue with the most commonly held perception in order to develop a more culturally responsive way to engage minority students (p. 604). Both Braxton et al. (1997) and Tierney (1992) admit that Tinto never saw his integration model as water proof and the perfect model. Braxton et al. (1997) specifically note that; "the first critic of Tinto's model is Tinto himself" (p.146). Tierney (1992) and Braxton et al. (1997) acknowledge that "Tinto is the first to acknowledge that his model is not perfect" (p. 607, p. 146).

Thus, despite strong criticisms against Tinto's notion of integration, no better and working definition of integration has been discovered to rival Tinto's notion of integration. Critics call for an expansion of Tinto's model and a further study of integration model in order to come out with a better model. Tinto has the same inquiry

mind and this was what led to his discovery of his integration-retention model. In the opening statements of his researched work, Tinto (1975) acknowledged the several works that had been done by the researchers before him and called for more intensive, inquiry mind in order to arrive at a practical working model. Tinto (1975) notes:

Despite the very extensive literature on dropout from higher education, much remains unknown about the nature of the dropout process...Research on dropout from higher education has also been marked by inadequate conceptualization of the dropout process. This is particularly noticeable in the lack of attention given to the development of those types of longitudinal that would lead to an understanding of the process of interaction, which bring, over time, differing individuals within the institution to varying levels of persistence and/or to varying forms of dropout behavior (Tinto, 1975, p. 89-90).

It was the lack of adequate understanding of dropout process that led Tinto to his great discovery of his integration theory. He explains in his work that his researched paper would be to attempt to explain this enigma of students' dropout in higher educational institutions. Tinto (1975) writes that "this paper attempts to formulate a theoretical model that explains the processes of interaction between the individual and the institution that lead differing individuals to drop out from institutions of higher education" (p. 90).

Because no better explanation has been found to explain why students drop out of institutions of higher education in America, Tinto's understanding and explanation of integration, as a means to improving retention and success, would be used in this research work in discussing international students experience in a predominantly white institution. In studying the experiences of international students, I used the phenomenological approach to explore the experiences as well as the challenges confronting international students in their new culture, the predominantly white university. I will in Chapter 3 explain in detail my methodology in carrying out this study.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

The effect of the 9/11 on America has not only affected the number of international student that come to America for studies but has also diminished the favors international students enjoy. Recounting the decline in number of international students that come to American higher institutions for studies, NAFSA: Association of International Educators (2008) noted that “international student enrollment in U.S. colleges and universities fell after 9/11 and stood at 582,984 in the academic year 2006-07; it would be well over 700,000—some 25 percent higher—if pre-9/11 growth rates had continued” (p. 5). Despite the decreasing number of international students in American white colleges, international students are pressed under some other restrictions. Bollag (2004) observes that visa restriction is imposed on foreign students and scholars since the September 11, 2001 attacks. In the light of this revelation, the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) decried this situation and advised;

Current U.S. immigration policies discourage many highly (intelligent and) educated foreigners from coming to this country to study and work, and make it impossible for U.S. companies, educational and research institutions, and medical facilities to bring valuable talent to America. While making it more difficult for many of the brightest minds in the world to come to this country, we are endangering out long-term economic future.

While national security is of the utmost importance, the United States must reform its visa immigration policies to ensure that America can continue its long tradition of welcoming the brightest minds in the world to live and work here (American Immigration Lawyers Association. Passport to Prosperity. All-Stars for America, 2004, p. 5).

Thus, even before the international students are given the visa to come into the American institutions, they are already in anxiety as a result of the restrictions they have passed through before the granting of their visas to come and study in the United States. These international students feel that they are unwelcomed to the United States and in the institutions where they are to study. The NAFSA: Association of International Educators (2008) agrees that there are already in America the “unwelcoming environment created by post-9/11 security measures and anti-foreign attitudes” (p.5). The international student even before his arrival to the United States feels unwelcomed, not wanted, and rejected. This tension is mixed with other unpleasant experiences. Yet because of the mission to actualize themselves through their educational career, the international student has no other option than to stay in this environment.

It is good that the experiences of these international students are studied in order to see how they can be helped to adapt to this environment that eventually becomes the home of many international students who come to study in the United States.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this thesis is to explore and expose the problems that hinder international students from integrating into white universities by relating the experiences of the international students in a predominantly white university. In discussing the importance of integration for college students, Tinto (1975) defines integration as the “degrees of congruency between the individual and his social environment” (p. 107). Integration in this sense involves the coming together that should exist between an individual and his environment. Integration involves the need of acceptance and agreement. This was what Tinto had in mind when he further explained that integration is

the sufficient “interaction with others in the college” and sufficient “congruency with the prevailing value patterns of the college collectivity” (Tinto, 1975, p. 92). Tinto (1975) distinguished two types of integration, the social and the academic. While social integration is the interaction between an individual and the given background, values, commitments, and persons of various characteristics in the college, academic integration involves the congruency between the individual’s intellectual development and the prevailing climate of an institution (Tinto, 1975). Hence, Tinto has provided the framework for my theoretical work. It is therefore in the light of Tinto’s definition of integration that I will discuss the integration of international students.

### **Specific Research Questions**

There are research questions for this study. The research questions were in the form of a semi-structured interview questionnaire. Answers to these questions will prompt other questions in order to clarify the stand of the interviewee. Some of the research questions for this study are:

1. How have you adapted to this college?
2. Was it hard for you to adjust and integrate into this environment?
3. Have you fully adapted?
4. Do you feel welcome and accommodated in the college?
5. What challenges do you face in this college?
6. How do you feel as a student of this institution?

### **Type of Research—phenomenological & qualitative**

The use of qualitative methodology has become increasingly prevalent in contemporary research as it provides rich informative and complex data that gives insight into the experience of others...Qualitative research is interested in the uniqueness of the interpretive process that occurs for an individual around a particular experience (Ang & Liamputtong, 2008, p. 111).

Creswell (2007) discusses the characteristics of the good qualitative research approach when he wrote that qualitative research begins:

With assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem...qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data...and data analysis that is inductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voice of participants, the flexibility of the researcher, and a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and it extends the literature or signals a call for action” (Creswell, 2007, p. 37).

As a qualitative researched work, I will conduct, transcribe, and analyze the interviews. After the transcription and the analysis of the data, I will form codes and themes through putting similar and likely thoughts together. The discussions of the themes will form the crux of this researched paper. This portion that discusses the themes will be referred to as the findings. This will be followed by another chapter where I will discuss some possible suggestions. The qualitative research approach or method that I will employ in discussing my work will be phenomenological. This means that my presentation will not only be descriptive but that I will be able to interpret my data in the light of the lived experiences of everyday life. Creswell (2007) observes that “phenomenology is not only a description, but it also seen as an interpretative process in which the researcher makes an interpretation (i.e., the researcher ‘mediates’ between meanings...) of the meaning of the lived experiences” (p. 59).



The phenomenological method of research is a type of a qualitative study. The phenomenological scientific approach came from the philosophical method of the German philosopher, Edmund Husserl (1859- 1938). The phenomenological scientific approach tries to treat reality, the natural world, (phenomena) as it is without foregone conclusion. Phenomenological approach suspends all judgments about what is real, which is often a natural attitude, in order to find a more certain truth without bias.

Phenomenological methodology uses Husserl word, “epoche”, in its approach. This Husserlian German concept, “epoche”, which is translated “bracketing” enables investigators and researchers to “set aside their experiences, as much as possible, to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination” (Creswell, 2007, pp. 59-60). Thus, the phenomenological approach implies going beyond the externals to project the objectivity of the situation. Hence, in qualitative phenomenological work or rather in a phenomenological qualitative study, the researcher as much as possible tries to keep themselves out of prejudice and bias. Qualitative phenomenological approach is an appropriate approach for my research work because researching on the experiences of individuals in a foreign country may carry with them issues that are emotional. This method of approach will enable me to study the issues from the critical perspective of the “epoche.” Furthermore, the qualitative nature of the research shows that there are not a lot of literature and data out there to rely on; hence, using the qualitative phenomenological method, I will be able to collect data through a semi-structured interview where I will probe my interviewees to gain more insights into the experiences of international students. I will, therefore, as much as possible apply the principles of a

qualitative phenomenological researcher without letting personal bias, prejudice, predisposition or a preconceived notion influence this work.

### **Participants**

The participants of this research work are eight international students from a predominantly white university in the Midwestern part of the United States. One of these participants refers herself as a hidden immigrant or a global nomad and this representation of herself qualifies her to participate in my interview. This participant though born in the United States left the United States before the age of three and only came back to the United States to attend college. Though born in America, this individual grew up with the foreign orientation. These international students are between the ages of 20 and 50 with an average age of 27. Almost all the students that form my participants belong to different departments and disciplines and are enrolled as international students. These international students from different departments include both undergraduate and graduate students. This sample of international students includes those who live in the university's hostels and those living outside the university, in their own apartments. This is so chosen in order to give a wide range of perspective of ideas from international students coming from different cultural backgrounds to embrace the culture of a predominantly white university. The eight participants in my interview fulfils Polkinghorne's (1989) recommendation lauded by Creswell (2007) that researchers in phenomenological research interview from 5 to 25 individuals who have all experienced a particular phenomenon (Creswell, p. 61).

In the purposeful selection of the international students, I contacted the international affairs office and sent an e-mail to the office detailing the administrative

center of international students of the need of some international students to serve as my interviewees. The Office of international affairs sent and forwarded e-mails to all international students encouraging the students to serve as interviewees to my research. Furthermore, I attended international students' organization meetings intimating different groups of the purpose and the importance of participating as interviewees. Here, I challenged the international students on the need to serve as participants to the interview. I explained to them how the research work will expose and evaluate the experiences of international students in a predominantly white university. Interested international students responded to my clarion call to serve as participants in the interview through e-mails and phone conversations. It is from these interested individuals among the international students who responded that I hand-picked and selected some participants. This satisfies Creswell (2007) advise that the "inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study" (Creswell, p.125). I also encouraged some participants in the interview to contact other potential participants who have relatable experiences as international students in a predominantly white university.

Purposeful sampling in qualitative research is the selection of "information-rich cases" and the researcher searches for "information-rich informants, groups, places or events of study" (Miller, 2009). These information-rich performers had to be "individuals who are accessible, willing to provide information, and distinctive for their accomplishments and ordinariness or who shed light on a specific phenomenon or issue being explored" (Creswell, 2007). My sampling strategy was a maximum variation

sampling because I wanted to obtain “maximum differences of perceptions” about my topic among “information-rich informants” (Miller, 2009).

The participants in the interview included two doctoral students from Senegal and South Africa; five master’s students from China, and one undergraduate student from Malaysia. The disciplines of these international students who served as my interviewees range from English to Education, Physics, Statistics, Accounting to Communications and Journalism, and Advertising. The interviewees comprised three males and five females. The selection of the interviewees was carefully and selectively made in order to interview individuals who have vast experiences as international students. This selections supports Creswell (2007) who admonishes that “decisions need to be made about who or what should be sampled, what form the sampling will take, and how many people or sites need to be sampled (Creswell, p.125).” I decided to use pseudonyms to refer to my participants because of the necessity of protecting their confidentiality and privacy as directed by the institution’s International Review Board (IRB) directives.

### **Site**

The site of all the interviews was a predominantly white university in the Midwestern part of the United States. I have decided to keep the name of the university confidential in order to protect the rights and the privacy of the participants according to the Interview Review Board (IRB) requirements. The site of my interview, a predominantly white university is a public and land-grant institution according to the Land grant act of 1862. It is a large, Research Extensive institution. The university has the student population of approximately 25,000 with about 534 being international

students. This shows that only about 2.13 percent of the entire population of the student body is international students. The university is located in a culturally and predominantly white community of about 250,000 people of which about 6000 of this number come from around 40 different countries of the world. The Midwestern part of the United States where this university is situated normally gets a lot of snow during the winter season and this might have been one of the reasons that made this community to be principally white.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Employing the focus approach that Denzin and Lincoln (2003) expounded in their work and confirmed by Morelon-Quainoo, Johnson, Winkle-Wagner, Kuykendall III, Ingram, Carter, Gilbert, Smith, and Santiague, (2009), I decided to uncover the experiences of international students in a predominantly White University. The study used a semi-structured interview questionnaire. The questionnaire was about 15 questions with probes. Samples and data were collected through interviews and were tape recorded. I conducted the interviews according to Denzin and Lincoln's (2003) advice which Morelon-Quainoo et al. (2009) advocated when they argued that the interviewer "directs the inquiry and the interaction among respondents" (Morelon-Quainoo et al., 2009, p. 9). The one-to-one interviews were conducted at one of the lecture halls in the university. Each interview lasted for about 50 to 60 minutes.

All the interviews were held in the afternoon and/or in the evening. This was to enable the interviewees to come for the interview at their free time and when they had no lectures. I felt that allowing my time to be flexible will help me in accommodating my

interviewees' times and schedules. Furthermore, it was to enable my interviewees to answer questions with relaxed minds. My interviewees did not need to rush a call or another exercise when they have presented themselves for the interview. This also enhanced the clarity of their thought. I tried to first gain and establish rapport with the interviewee before I began asking them questions (Creswell, 2007). This helped in building and establishing trust among my interviewees. After the interviews were transcribed, I sent the transcripts back to my participants to review and make corrections of what they thought did not reflect the ideas and thoughts they wanted to share. I ensured that the ideas of my participants were kept confidential except for the purpose of education and learning. I took these steps in order to protect my participants' confidentiality and comfort. I remain so grateful to all the informants for the insights they brought to my research topic. I have written and have talked to some of my interviewees as an acknowledgement for the new insight and understanding I gained through their participation (Miller, 2009).

The research questions which are semi-structured questionnaire were used for the interview. The response of each interviewee prompted other question(s) in order that I may understand clearly the thoughts and perceptions of each participant as regards the experiences of international students in white universities. The interview questions are as follows:

What determined your choice of this school for your graduate or undergraduate studies?

How have you adapted to this college?

Was it hard for you to adjust and integrate into this environment? Have you fully adapted?

How would you assess your interaction with the faculty and students of your department in the college?

Do you feel welcome and accommodated in the college?

Was it hard for you to get used to the lectures and students of your college?

What challenges do you face in the college? Do you think white students and other students of color face the same challenges? Do you perceive that the challenges you face are peculiar to yourself or also to international students and/or students of color? (Probe!)

Do you think there are methods or systems put in place to accommodate minority and international students? How effective are these in accommodating international students and students of color in the college?

How would you describe your perception of the challenges the students of color and minorities face in adapting and integrating into the college system?

Can you describe what you have done to integrate yourself in the college? Did it work?

Can you describe a time when you integrate yourself to the college? Did it work?

Are there any special technique you perceive professors to use in the classroom in order to accommodate you and international students to enable them integrate into the culture of the college?

Do you perceive any recent trends that enable you to integrate more into the college system?

Do you an assistantship? Was it hard for you to get an assistantship? Do you know any international students who do not have assistantship? What do you know that they have done to gain assistantship?

How do you feel as a student of this institution? If you are given the opportunity to re-choose, will you choose this institution for your graduate studies? (Probe)

What else can you tell me that would help me understand your thoughts about the integration of international and minority students in the university?

Individuals who attend the interview know that they are free to opt out of the interview and have all their answers cancelled if they choose to cease to participate at any time in the research. The interviewees give consent that they can be called in the future for further questions if need be.

### **Delimitations**

I have restricted myself to discussing the experience of international students in one selected American White University and not in all American White Universities because of my inability to access what goes on in all American White Universities. My inability to interview students from many white colleges may have had an effect and consequence on the result I might have got since all white colleges do not have the same system of administration. Furthermore, I was limited by circumstances, thus, it was not possible for me to interview all the colleges which are predominantly white in the Mid-



western part of the United States of America. This was as a result of my immobility and lack of resources to take me round these areas. This research, therefore, concentrated on interviews of international students in one predominantly white university in the Midwestern part of the United States. Both the undergraduates and the graduate students who fall into this category were taken into consideration.

### **Limitations**

Since the interviewees were international students, it is my hope that views of these international students in this predominantly white college will reflect the views of a majority of international students and minority students in other white colleges or that the findings will in some ways be transferable to the experiences of other international students.

The limitations of a qualitative research were obvious given the fact that many factors made it impossible to arrive at an objective answer. In their recent work, Johnson, Kuykendall III, and Winkle-Wagner (2009) articulate the limitations of a qualitative research and work. They enumerated other different factors that may work against arriving at certainty of an objective truth like the small size of the sample, the inclusion of only one institution, which are already part of the limitation of this work. Johnson, et al., (2009) wrote:

We recognize several limitations of this study, namely, the number of participants, the higher number of female participants, the inclusion of only one institution, and the ethnic composition of the focus group. Although qualitative research allows a researcher to delve more deeply into a topic with a smaller size, a larger number of respondents would provide more significant evidence and thereby enhance current findings. Small sample size makes it difficult to provide conclusions and

suggestions that would be applied to a wide range of institutional types (Johnson, Kuykendall III, and Winkle-Wagner, 2009, p. 58).

### **Data Analysis**

I understand that data analysis is “eclectic” (Miller 2009). This simply means that there no “right” or “wrong” way for collecting and analyzing data. Therefore, the data will be analyzed after transcribing the interview recorded to capture the interviewees’ perceptions, views, opinions, feelings and thoughts together with the notes taken to reflect the facial reflections of the interviewees. As my participants were talking and answering the interview questions, I took notes of some of the important gestures they made like when they stopped to think, when they were surprised or shocked with a question(s). Sometimes, when some questions were posited to them, they first laughed before tackling the questions. The gestures and the corresponding notes that I took helped me understand some of the serious and important aspects and/or experiences they tried to narrate.

In analyzing the perceptions of my interviewees, I put the same answers or likely answers together with notes that either emphasizes importance or seriousness. I underlined the same answers and circled likely answers inside the transcribed sheet. Thus, individual comments served as items of data and these formed the codes and the eventual themes. By the side of the transcription paper, I noted codes, that is, the likely points that can be discussed under one heading or section. In coding my data, I was always ruminating Miller’s (2009) advice that in order to find out what to code I have to be making the judgment that the information has meaning “sentence by sentence, chunk by chunk” (Miller, 2009). The common headings and sections were designated as

themes. I also put recurring themes together as they showed the importance of the themes. These themes were analyzed and studied. Suggestions were given based on the analysis as to the area of consideration in future research.

### **Validation Technique**

I took into consideration Lipson's (1994) grouping of ethical issues which Creswell (2007) seriously lauded. Lipson (1994) among others encouraged the use of informed consent procedures and confidentiality toward participants (Creswell, p. 141). The predominate white university International Review Board (IRB) approved my copy of the informed consent which I gave to each of the interview participant to read and sign before each interview. The interviewees were also informed that I would try as much as possible to protect their privacy by using their pseudo-names when narrating their experiences and articulating their ideas, feelings, perceptions and reflections. The participants knew that they were free to drop at any point in the course of the research and that once they drop their testimony or reflections will not be used in my research so as to protect their privacy. Thus, the interview was also conducted in obedience to the criteria given by the American Anthropological Association by maintaining the anonymity of my interviewees (Creswell, 141).

Other validation techniques employed to make sure that my data analysis was accurate and valid included "(a) peer debriefing, (b) member checks, (c) assessing my own biases and value orientations; and (d) rigorous data analysis" (Winkle-Wagner, 2009, p. 9). Though I did not make use of peer debriefing because of the nature and kind of my study, I however, used member checks. The participants had the opportunity to

have their transcribed interviews and were to go through them to make sure that their perceptions and thoughts were not poorly reflected. This was done in order to insure the accuracy, credibility, trustworthiness, and validity of my research work. I did talk to some participants to have a clear understanding of their perspectives. Some of the participants also made some changes that reflected a change of thought or perceptiveness from what they originally held or said. There was member checking throughout the study.

The notes I took when I was interviewing my participants helped me in identifying some of the key themes during my data analysis. Furthermore, my personal background and orientation helped facilitate my studies. As an African in a predominantly white university I was interested to find out how people of different cultural and ethnicity adapt to a culture that is not primarily theirs. This interest and inquisitiveness to know what is happening with students of other cultures gave rise to this research work. Though I did not enroll in the university as an international student, many of my interviewees saw me as one of them and were able to be open to discuss their challenges and fears. My personal background, color, and language accent helped to build trust. Some of them during the interview wanted to know if I am passing the same challenges as they do. I, however, did not give in to this luring act because I wanted my work to be free from every external and emotional bias.

### **Study Significance**

The integration of international students into white universities must involve proper interaction between international students' different ethnicities, cultures, languages, race, and colors with the host universities cultures, language, and color. Each of the cultures, languages, and differences are to be respected and protected and shown to

be important. The integration of international students will blend diversities together into a diversified unity and a united diversity in a way that the important values of different cultures are assimilated and absorbed.

It is the hope of this researched work that sharing the experiences of international students in a predominantly white college should expose the incapacitations and frustrations of foreign students and thus open the door for their proper integration. Relating the experiences of the international students in a predominantly white university will expose the challenges these international students face to the universities administrators. Tinto (1975) argues that a student is integrated into an institution when the individual becomes both socially and academically integrated. Thus, the findings of this little work will challenge institutions of higher education and the society at large to find ways that will facilitate the integration of international students into white universities. This will enable the universities and the society to harness and tap the potentials nature has given to these international students studying overseas in white universities.

Thus, in chapter 4, I will discuss my findings of the interview I conducted on my participants. There are three themes to be discussed in my findings. These themes relate the experiences of these international students in a predominantly white university. Many of these experiences are quite challenging. My participants tried to relate how these experiences have challenged their adaptation and integration into white predominate university.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Findings**

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of international students in a predominantly white university. In this chapter, I will discuss the findings of my interview with eight international students in a predominantly white university in the Midwestern part of the United States. This chapter will discuss three important themes that run through the interviews. The first theme observes that “here is different.” It discusses the shock and the surprise of the international students to discover that though human beings live “here”, in the university environment, their way of life and their cultural orientation are not like from where many of the international students come from.

Furthermore, the international students witnessed differences in the culture of the predominantly white university. These differences are found in the classroom atmosphere, the way majority students interact in class, and the way the majority students live their lives. Some of the international students see these differences in culture as scary and intimidating.

There is also the strong effect of cultural differences. Though there are cultural differences, these international students argue that some of the cultural differences impact them seriously because of the strong effects they have on their lives. One of the cultural differences that had serious effect on them was the language differences. Many of the international students came from places where English is not the official language, as such not matter how they try, they discover that they are not able to speak like the majority (domestic) white students. Furthermore, some of the international students acknowledged that their inability to speak the English language fluently affected their

learning ability, their grades, and their ability to get job positions. Some other foreign students discuss how they are discriminated on account of their color, race, or language.

In this chapter, I will relate as much as possible the experiences of these international students and how these experiences have challenged their success in the university. In order to protect the confidentiality and privacy of my interviewees, I have decided to use pseudonyms to address them. Below is the demographic table that summarized their pseudonyms with their countries of origin, the degrees they have acquired, and the degree they are pursuing to get. I have also listed their majors and their sex. Immediately after the demographic table of participants, I will begin to discuss each participant.

#### **Participants' demographic table**

<b>Pseudonym</b>	Nita	Ceene	Bueto	Cottis	Luuna	Annie	Jinny	Jamarl
<b>Country of origin</b>	Malaysia	China	China	China	China	China	America	Senegal
<b>Sex and Marital Status</b>	Female and single	Female and single	Male and single	Male and single	Female and single	Female and single	Female and single	Male and married
<b>Degree(s) possessed</b>	-----	B.A	B.S	B.S	B.A	B.S	B.A., MMus., and M.S	B.A., Maitrise, and Dea
<b>Degree sought</b>	B.A.	M. A	M. S	M. S	M. A	M. S	Ph.D	Ph.D
<b>Major</b>	Advertising (4 <sup>th</sup> year)	Educational Admin. (2 <sup>nd</sup> year)	Statistics (2 <sup>nd</sup> year)	Civil Eng. (1 <sup>st</sup> year)	Advertising (1 <sup>st</sup> year)	Economics (2 <sup>nd</sup> year)	Educational Psych/ QQA. (1 <sup>st</sup> year)	English (1 <sup>st</sup> year)
<b>Hobbies</b>	Playing piano	-----	sports	Movie, travel, comic	movie, music, travel-ing, piano	traveling, cooking, taking photos	Piano, cats, working out	Soccer, music, reading internet
<b>Professional organization</b>	PRSSA., Ad club	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	American Asso. of Public Opinion Research, American Evalu. Assoc., Inter. Dev. Evaluation Assoc.	Min. of Edu. Senegal UNL (grad. Stud.



### **Introduction to Participants**

Jamarl is a first year doctoral student of English department in the predominantly white university. He hails from a French speaking West African country, Senegal. He studied English in his home university and holds a B.A., Maitrise, (equivalent to Master's) and Dea. Jamarl described the academic system of education in Senegal and in most Francophone countries. He noted that after your Baccalaureate (high school leaving certificate or A levels), "you go to the university for three years before you earn a License (BA). Then the following years you start your course work for the Maitrise (MA)." He explained that "If you do well in your Maitrise and show through your thesis that you can continue in higher education then you are accepted for the DEA (Diplome d'Etudes Approfondies)." According to Jamarl, DEA literally means Advanced Studies' degree but is translated as Pre-doctoral degree. He noted that "In a nutshell: 3rd year BA/ 4th year Maitrise/ 5th year DEA."

Before coming to the United States for his doctoral studies, Jamarl had been an exchange student in Portsmouth, United Kingdom, where he was a French Lector. He worked with the Ministry of Education in his home country prior to being a graduate student in the United States. Before travelling overseas for further studies, he taught French language in the grade school and English in a high school in his home country, Senegal. Jamarl is married to a woman and has two children. Very tall and ebony black, his fingers are very long and he had a very nice hair cut that added to make prominent his handsomeness. Jamarl looks self reliant, hardworking, and friendly as clearly depicted by what he wrote. He is a person who has respect for others and he says that "he demands to

be respected.” His hobbies include Soccer, Music, reading, and the internet. He was very much relaxed and self confident when he was speaking during the interview.

Jinny is also a first year doctoral student. She was born in United States but because her parents were missionaries she left the United States before she was 3 and stayed in Swaziland and Malawi located in the Southern part of Africa. She had her grade and high schooling in those African countries. She came back to the United States for her undergraduate and graduate studies. Jinny sees herself as a “global nomad” and as somebody who is “cross cultural” to put them in her own words. She notes “I call myself a hidden immigrant because I don’t look like an immigrant but my formative years, the thoughts that shaped and molded me to be who I am were not spent in this country.” Jinny was interviewed owing to her wealth of experience in cross-cultural knowledge that she so freely shared. She shared her understanding of coming to do her undergraduate studies in the United States from Africa. Jinny will major on Educational Psychology/ Quantitative, Qualitative and Psycho-educational Process. She holds a B. A., Master’s in Music (MMus.) and M.S. She has worked as an Opinion Research Corp.; Ipsos; Directions Research, and Census Bureau. Her job titles include: Data Processor, Data Analyst, Statistician, Research Assistant, and Teaching Assistant. She belongs to various professional organizations and they include the American Association of Public Opinion Research, American Evaluation Association, and the International Development Evaluation Association. Her honors and awards include the Emonen fellowship, Dale Carnegie Awards, and Integrity and Reality Awards (Ipsos). She is single with no children. Her hobbies include playing and listening to piano, cats, and working out. She describes herself as integrity oriented, persevering, and thorough. Jinny speaks softly and

will always smile intermittently. She does look as a person who rarely gets angry. Her American accent and critical choice of words to describe her thoughts and perception show her mastery of the language.

Annie is an Economics graduate major seeking a Master of Science (M.S.) degree from the predominantly white university in the United States. She is a native of China. She has worked in the Housing facilities in the university and is at the time of the interview a Weekend Custodian. She is still single and has no children. Her hobbies include travelling, cooking and taking photos. Annie still young in her twenty and very beautiful with her blond hair that she would always brush with her fingers as she answered questions posited to her. She, however, looked like committed to the interview questions as she would always think before she answered any questions.

Luuna who hails from China is in her first year as a graduate student of Advertising seeking a Master's degree. She has not had any previous employment but at the time of the interview she works in the office of international affairs. Luuna is single and has no children. She is interested in movies, music, travelling, and piano. She describes herself as "easy going, hard working, and has strong communication skills." Her personality is captivating. She would always smile as she talked and would like to give examples to buttress her point as she gave vibrant answers to the questions.

Cottis is a graduate student seeking a Master's degree in Civil Engineering. He is a Research Student. He had his assistantship from the predominantly white university even before he came to the United States for his graduate studies from China. He is single and has no children. He is interested in movies, travel, and comics. In self describing

himself he says, “be unique.” Cottis has a very reserved personality. It took him time to answer questions. He found it hard to express his experiences even though he claimed to understand the questions. When I sent him the transcripts to proofread, he revised and changed some of his previous answers to the questions.

Bueto, a graduate student of the department of Statistics is working on his Master’s degree. He came to the United States to study after gaining his B. S in Mathematics in China. He is interested in sports. He is also single without children. He describes himself as confident and careful. He also found it hard relating his perceptions and ideas. He is, however, very lovely and friendly.

Ceene is a graduate student of Educational Administration. She is working on her Master’s degree and hails from China. She has spent two years in the United States. She has not been married and she has no children. Ceene is quite calm and friendly. She was interested in the interview and tried to answer every question that I posited to her. She was able to trust and repose confidence in me. She was open and shared her experiences and her challenges with me. It was a great encounter to discover that some were very willing to share their experiences without having anything to hide.

Nita hails from Malaysia. She is a senior in the undergraduate department in Advertising. She came to the United States after completing two years in actuary science in a university in Malaysia. She changed to Advertizing after studying actuary science for sometime in the predominantly white university. Nita has worked at a Dining Hall. She is the assistant in food service. Her professional organizations include PRSSA and the Advertizing Club. Nita is single and has no children. Her interest and hobby include

playing the piano. She is easy going. It seems, however, that Nita has had so much hard time in the predominantly white university that she talked about going back to Malaysia immediately she finished her undergraduate studies.

### **Definitions of themes**

The data discussed in this work are the experiences of international students in a predominantly white university. Eight international students from different countries recount their experiences in a primarily white institution of higher education that relate to the fact that they are foreigners and that they are treated as such. This shows how hard it is for them to adapt to their new environment. No matter how hard they try to overcome the fears that punctuate their academic and social lives, other factors make it cumbersome and impossible. A good number of the international students battle with the problem of the America culture and language. These international students are pressured to struggle not by a particular person but the situations they find themselves. For instance, they are forced to speak the American accent. In the course of relating the experiences and encounters of these international students, I will recount some of their stories in order to describe their situations.

The three themes discussed in this work describe the challenges of the foreign students as they share their experiences in a predominantly white university. In one of the themes, “Here is quite different; here is not home,” the international students shared their experiences of surprise that their new relocation did not look like their country. Many of them expressed that they “had not adapted” yet to the new environment while some stated that the predominantly white university is quite different. In discussing the second theme,

the international students expressed that there are differences between their home cultures and the culture of the predominantly white university. These foreign students shared the differences in the classroom atmosphere, the teacher-student interaction, the method of teaching and learning in the classroom. The individualistic culture of always be “by yourself” and “with yourself” was a “scary” discovery for most of the international students. Some of them could not understand being in a class with the white student who is not interested in communicating with them. Others shared the difference in the food they eat and the way they think. All these differences bear on the differences on the different cultural backgrounds and orientations. In explaining the third theme, the strong effect of cultural differences, the international students relate the differences in language and how they are discriminated against in job applications and opportunities.

The international students battle these experiences and challenges silently and alone. Most often they do not have any person to share their concerns and frustrations with and this is what makes the challenges harder for them. Some of them suffer from loneliness and aloneness. Some of them do not have friends they can trust and rely on. Oftentimes, these international students are only able to share their concerns with their families through the phone. Some of them contemplate going back home. Who knows how many of the international students who have dropped out of college in the United States because of frustration? Who knows how many of the foreign students have been forced home without finishing their studies as a result of the situation they encountered in their challenges? How many of the international students may have possibly taken their lives as a result of the unbearable nature of conditions they found themselves? There may be the possibility that some foreign students may quit school to join bad gangs and

perpetrate evil in the American society if they are not able to persist in college. Hence there is need to study and explore the experiences of these foreign students in order to discover ways they can be helped to overcome their difficulties. This is as urgent and necessary as there are international students with these problems.

***Here is quite different like it is not home***

Many international students who come to study in the United States end up living and working in the U. S and many of them have played considerable role in the American society (Lee & Rice, 2007; Morinaka, 2007). The situation of many of the international students in American colleges today may not be different from the situation of their predecessors, the international students of “yester-years” who are today gainfully employed in the different economic sectors in the United States after their academic studies. Furthermore, many others who are alumni of American higher educational institutions take up leadership roles in their respective countries and these may benefit international relations with the American government (Lee & Rice, 2007).

Many of the participants gave various reasons for choosing the predominantly white university. The reasons why these international students picked their university of choice are interesting but numerous. Ceene reasoned that she picked to study in the predominantly white university because “the ranking is higher.” Thus, Ceene wanted to avail herself of the opportunity to study in one of the prestigious and best college she could possibly get. Bueto decided to apply to this predominantly white university for his graduate program because “the school has a separate department for my major...and is older than some of these universities.” Bueto was also influenced by that kind of reasoning that inspired Ceene. Thus, Bueto wanted a school that has survived the test of

time and had proven itself through number of years. Others like Luuna maintained that the predominantly white university “has a high academic rank of my program” just like Ceene, while Annie states that because “there is an educational program between my university in China and this school,” she decided to come to this university for her graduate studies. Annie’s influence for coming to a predominantly white university is really striking. This relationship between the university in China and her college here is a relationship both the staff and the majority white university should jealously guard so that more students from the university in China might continue to come over for their studies. These intentions portray the fact that these international students are in the American universities with the hope of achieving better living conditions whether in the United States or in their respective countries after their academic career. It will serve for the best interest of the American universities as well as the American society; therefore, to support these international students as many of them may become the society’s stalwarts who may influence the American universities through their donations and other material assistance that will positively influence the American society. However, when these international students were asked to relate their experiences almost all the participants in the interview used words like “not quite adapted,” “lonely,” “hard,” “difficult,” “challenges,” “shock,” “not used to this” to describe their experiences.

Cottis, a first year graduate student of Civil Engineering who came from China to do his graduate program because he had an assistantship from the predominantly white university uses the word “not quite adapted” and “not quite used to this” to express his experiences in the principally white university. Cottis statements relate the uneasy type of experiences he is going through in the mainly white university. Cottis maintains that his



experiences were not just personal but the general experiences of other international students. He states, “I think most of us (the international students) are in that problem”. It is so striking that Cottis was convinced that his experiences in the predominantly white university would be very parochial if he was to take it as a particular and personal problem.

Nita, an undergraduate student of advertising in her senior year who grew up in Malaysia and had two years of undergraduate studies in Malaysia before she transferred to the United States to continue her studies clearly states “The feeling is still different like it is not home. I can’t really say that I am fully adapted but kind of adapted to it but not fully adapted to it. I feel I am quite lonely here and I am just alone.” Nita continues to share her experiences of the shock she felt in the predominantly white university. She describes what it means to be in an environment that is totally different and completely white. “I feel like I am alone. I don’t like this place at all because I feel like this is surely so boring. It is totally different from Malaysia.” There is an indication here that even though Nita knew that she was leaving her native place, Malaysia, to study abroad, she strongly hoped that her new residential place, the predominantly America white university would just be like her place in Malaysia. She expected to see herself interact with the majority students and be able to adapt and integrate well into the university culture. Bueto, a graduate student from China came to know about the mainly white university through the US news live. He confirms Nita’s expectation of interacting with majority student when he argues that “it is still a little difficult” to be here. “I don’t have the chance to communicate with other students except Chinese students.” He continues, “I don’t think I am part of this school.” Thus, though the international students have

come into the predominantly white university in the United States with the primary intention of pursuing an academic career, they also expect that they would be able to integrate well with the majority students and be able to find here a new home far in their new abode that is far from home.

Luuna, a graduate student from China also shares her experiences in studying in a largely white institution. She clearly remarks that “it was definitely a challenge.” She succinctly puts it thus, “it is quite hard for me to get adapted.” Though Luuna understands that adaptation in an environment is a gradual process, she makes the point that is quite hard to get adapted to the present environ as the challenges are always there. She declares, “even if I express myself and my worries to you, you won’t understand... We are facing challenges socially, academically, psychologically, economically; in these parts we all face challenges. Annie, a student from China retells her experiences in a principally white college. She remarks that “it is a little bit hard” to study overseas.

Ceene, also from China relates her own incidents. Her narrative relives the fact that she is always conscious that she is an international student in a predominantly white college. She comments that on coming into the prestigious white institution where she is admitted for her graduate course she became frustrated and uncomfortable. “I am an international student ...I felt uncomfortable here and frustrated...you know, we are still foreigners here.” Ceene maintains categorically that it is hard to live in a predominantly white university because “here is not our home town.” She comments, “I am not encouraged by this college.” This seems to portray the fact that Ceene expects not only to

have her academic education in the university but also anticipates to be treated as a bona fide member of the society. Jinny was born in the United State but had her grade and high school education in Swaziland and Malawi. She narrates her experience on coming back to the United States for her college education, “I had a lot of adjustments, many years of adjustments...America seems to be very superficial to me.” This statement authenticates Ceene’s comment that her encounter in the chiefly white college was frustrating and that the institution does not serve her the warmth of a home.

It was not as if the international students felt that their new place was not like home and they tried to adjust. They felt that other challenges made it hard for them to adjust easily. They further shared these other experiences that made it hard for them to adjust to their new environment. Some of these experiences and challenges I have decided to address in the following themes. I will therefore treat the challenge of the different of culture, which is one of the themes they talked about.

### ***There are differences in the culture***

These international students not only found the predominantly white university to be different and hard for them to adapt; they noticed the differences in the culture of the university and the American culture, hence, their inadaptability to the university and its environs. Discussing the differences in culture Lunna states:

I think it is very different from the culture in China that is the culture here. I mean the culture in China in every single aspect, in the atmosphere of the class, it is different and in the way people live. Even in the way people are networking with each other, all these are different.

In an effort to integrate into the white colleges, some international students had to change their majors because it was hard for them to be alone and lonely and had no one to attend to them when they were stocked with some academic work. Nita who changed her major from actuarial science to advertising says that the reason for her changing her major was “closely related” to her trying to get adjusted with the environment. Nita narrates the experience that resulted in her changing her major:

I decided to change my major. So...I keep on complaining to my parents, oh here is different from Malaysia and that I want to go back. Like the first one or two months here, my parents asked me to come back to Malaysia and they just couldn't stand to see that I am suffering because I talk to my mom everyday... And even my dad asked me to come back. And after sometime, I told my mom that I wanna change major... My mum said just change to what I like.

Nita relates that this decision was reached in order to enable her adapt and acclimatize herself in her new environment. She thought changing her major would help reduce her stress. She observes that she needed company but found none because most of the majority students “are quite busy with their own things...it is not easy to get to know students...they are US citizens.” Nita was so frustrated that her constant struggle to go home almost brought misunderstanding in her family and between her parents because “my mom changed her mind and asked me to just stay there and my dad was like, ah you come back. Sometimes, they constantly quarreled because my dad asked me to come back but my mom asked me to stay here.” Like Cottis, Nita maintains that “most international students will face this problem.” This shows some of the challenges international students face as they try to balance the challenge of staying connected with their family in their native country and at the same time trying to comply with the intention and desire of their family in their native country. These experiences also add up

with the challenge of trying to adapt to their new environment. This, of course, can be challenging to the international students and some of them are cut in the web of not knowing what to do. Sometimes, these so frustrate their academics and many of them are not able to persist in their new academic environment.

Nita relates how the newly admitted international students are so anxious to have other international students in the same class with them to enable them to help each other in difficult courses. She narrates the story of the anxiety expressed by these newly admitted international students when she hosted them.

I hosted the new international students last semester and they were very, very worried about not only the language problem but whether there is any international student in their class, what was their class, it is all Americans because some of them will think that it so scary because you do not have any international student in the class. International student does not mean a person from their own country but from all other countries. It is like if you are in a class that has at least one international student, you will feel more secure that in a class you the only international student.

She explains that the majority students do not harm or kill the international students but it is just that they do not have time to interact with the international students and this is disturbing to the new admitted students who have come abroad to study. Nita relates:

They (the majority students) won't kill you but you can't really communicate. I mean in some ways it is quite scary...They will answer your question but they will not really show an interest in talking to you...I think they just don't have any topic to talk to you because they don't know anything about you.

Luuna's description of her encounters with the majority students in the class supports Nita's testimony. Luuna relates her battle in studying in a predominantly white university where many of the majority students are not interested in knowing or interacting with the international student in the class. She observes:

I have been through a lot of problems because I am the only Chinese student in my college. In all the classes I have been, I was the only one and those students (American), they just don't think you as an international student and so when they speak, when they have group discussion they wouldn't slow down they just talk what they want to talk. That threw me off all the way. So, last semester was disaster. I think every international student will experience such period...I suffered a lot from like the language, the culture, the culture shock.

Through this statement Luuna underscores the fact that some of the international students may not do well in a course as a result of many circumstances. She notes the dissatisfaction she had in the course and the semester, "last semester was a disaster." When you do not have people to work with in school or as friends, it can be very hard.

Annie also relates that the friends she has are international students because it is very difficult to be friends with the majority students. She narrates her experiences as an international student, "I think it was so lonely when I walk in the campus but you know we have to solve all the problems by ourselves, so, although there are so many international students here, Chinese students here, but it is so lonely from my house." She, however, maintains that the reason for the cold relationship and interaction between the majority and international students in the class may be because the majority students are shy.

I think am making friends, international students more than the American students. I think that is the problem I am facing now because I think, I don't know, you ask students but I think it is a little bit hard to make friends with them (the majority students) because I think some of them are shy. They don't know how to communicate with international students...They don't want to talk with me.

Bueto, like other international students begins also to recount his experiences in the white university that has a culture different from the Chinese culture. He remarks, "I

don't have the chance to communicate with other students except Chinese students. Every day, I study and have dinner with my friends but they are all Chinese students. I have little interaction with the majority students here." Bueto continues, "Just for example the student will tell you that he does not have time to do something about your life. I spend my time with my friends from China." Bueto narrates even his experiences outside the university and because he knew that he came from a culture that is different he did not confront the persons involved. "Like the last time when I was riding my bicycle at night, some white people nearly shot me. But I did not know what was in their mind. I kind of walked out." He also relates how he lost his debit card and "someone used my debit card to have some shopping. He declares, "What I think most is the way we live is quite different from the way the Native American lives... Everything is different. I need more chance to interact with these natives and come to know the way they live." Bueto know that through interaction with people he would be able to integrate into the new culture he has found himself. Hence, he states the need of having the majority students as friends and then interacts with them. Bueto's statement testifies that the majority students may not really be interacting with the international students. He would like the majority students to be interrelating with the international students. He wants the system where international and majority students are friends and intermingle. He also expresses the fear some of the international students have of white majority students because of his shooting experience. This kind of situation exists because some of the students have not yet come to comprehend how the white students live. If the friendly relationship exists between the majority and the international students, it will be easy to find out that the bad ones are only a few disgruntled individuals.

Luuna underscores the need of interaction between the international and the majority students. She observes that the majority students do not hate the international students but that the warm relationship is not there. She suggests that relationships and interactions should not be based on simple greetings but has to involve relations and interactions that would be able to command students, international and the majority, to trust themselves and be open to themselves. She states, “I just don’t think that sometimes those welcomes come truly from their heart. They are just like, you are a new person, welcome but sometimes some students don’t want to know me.” She further asserts, “I think that they just live in their own world...they do not have interest in people from other cultures...I think part of the challenges is the same problems with all the international students like the culture thing, like the food.” This statement correlates with Bueto’s statement that the majority students live in their own world and do not care about others around them, the international students. Luuna criticizes some systems set to help international students adapt to their new environment as deficient. She annotates; “this is hard to measure...If you really want to integrate into the American culture that takes you a long, long time.” She continues “I mean if you are making friends and feeling welcome that is the outside thing. It is not the inner part. You still feel lonely and not like yet a part of the other people.” She stresses that any system set to ensure the proper integration of international students in the chiefly white university should be one that could be measured and that it might not be really possible.

Annie confronts the system put in place to help international and majority students know themselves. She describes this system in order to interpret its limitations and inadequacies.



They match one person with one person, one to one, face to face but that is just one friend. I think maybe they can put more people into this program, or maybe like their international students or their US students just like a group or they can make international students from different countries like their of them one is Chinese, one is India and so one. They can make it like a group not just one person. How to evaluate the outcome of our link program is another problem...

Annie notes that “they will just give you the person’s e-mail and after you are to communicate with each other and after that they don’t care about that and they don’t evaluate that.” She argues that this process only depend on the two people to make it work. Thus, if they do not have the same likes, interests, or temperament, this effort will not yield anything. She also gives an example of where the two people concerned in this program were not able to achieve anything.

Sometimes, it depends on the two people, you know that. My friend said to me, ‘oh it is so boring, I don’t like my link friend’ and it can get boring if we are all the time talking to him or her. We don’t have much of the same interest and we do not know what to do. So that is the problem.

She, however, acknowledges the problems and limitations of her own suggestions too. She therefore clarifies, “but another problem is that if more people join in the group, it is hard for them (the international affairs office) to know, because if the people are more, they cannot control it.” She concludes that “I think they would try to improve that program. I think they should improve it by evaluating the program. She notes that it is as a result of this that she plans to take a job with the office of international affairs.

You know recently I am planning to apply to be a working staff in international students’ organization because what made me to apply for it is because I know that there are still some problems for international students here so I just want to join them this year to make some improvements on that.

In the same vein Jinny narrates her experience on coming to the United States to begin her undergraduate studies, “I had a lot of adjustments, many years of adjustments...America seems to be very superficial to me.” She relates that her fellow students ask how she was doing without taking time to care.

Everybody was ‘hi Jinny.’ What is all this ‘hi,’ ‘how are you?’ Because you ask me ‘how I am,’ but you don’t want me to tell you ‘how I am’ and you show artificial. I meant I won’t say that but I will think that...Yes, I felt shocked. I think it probably took me at least three years even to start functioning...Inside myself, I was extremely lost.

This statement confirms Annie’s, Luuna’s, Nita’s, Bueto’s, and Ceene’s comments that the majority students do not have time for the international students. While Bueto remarks, “Just for example the student will tell you that he does not have time to do something about your life. I spend my time with my friends from China,” Luuna makes this clarifying statement;

I just don’t think that sometimes those welcomes come truly from their heart. They are just like, you are a new person, welcome but sometimes some students don’t want to know me. I think that they just live in their own world...they do not have interest in people from other cultures.

Luuna therefore contends that the majority students greet foreign students out of obligations rather than a desire to engage in a cordial friendly relationship. Jinny further explains that though she functioned well to attend classes and pass her exams with good grades, she was lost inside. She comments that it was in her senior year as an undergraduate that she gradually started feeling fine. She remarks that she felt shocked not because the majority students were “biased against” her or treated her as an international student but because they expected her to “act American.”

People expect me to act American so if somebody has some kind of bias against you because you are dark and has African skin, I am not going to experience that. What I am going to experience is that they might expect me to behave certain way that I might just don't behave or they might expect me to know pop culture...All I can say is 'no' and cringe and say I don't know anything you are talking about.

Therefore, once Jinny's American buddies discovered that she could not "act" like an American, they did not have time for her. They ignored her. Jinny notes that the expectation of the majority students for her to behave and act American made her shrink and shy away from them which made her lost inside.

Jamarl, also like other transnational student, bemoans the lack of interaction between international and majority students. He expresses how interaction between students was warmer in his native country.

With the students, it is a bit different than where I come from, where the relationship is warmer. But here to talk to them is different. It is like you come to class and do the job, everybody is busy...I mean it is not that warm, friendly environment that you will find in Africa...for example, just a case, I have to go to San Francisco on next Thursday, I still don't have someone to give me a ride, you know, I don't have a car.

Jamarl sees his inability to get somebody to give him a ride to the airport for his trip to San Francisco is as a result of the fact that the predominantly white university atmosphere is not as warm and friendly as his home country, Senegal. He further addresses the culture problem as the main reason why the majority students are not able to interact well with the international students. He compares the culture of life in the United Kingdom where he was before coming to the United States noting how he was able to interact with the natives over there.

Culturally, it is not easy for me at the moment to enter this society as I told you...I am thinking how long it will take to have real friends and you know, apart from the international students, I mean it might be a problem...I don't know the way people think. I don't know the types of problems or places. It didn't take long when I came to UK; I came to discover quickly places that were dangerous, etc. but here I can't actually know.

Jamarl's statements reveals that he has not relaxed and adapted to his new cultures since he has not been able to know the safe and dangerous parts of the town where he lives. He is still a little tensed up and afraid. This statement also echoes some fears and concerns in being in the United States as some other participants have also expressed. It is a concern for the international students who have come to study abroad to be in such a tension as they battle with the anxiety and strain of academics. Annie, on the other hand, blames herself for not being able to be friends with majority students. She sees the cold reception she receives from majority students as a result of her indifference to international students in China. She sees what she is undergoing now as reprisal of her actions in China towards international students.

I am thinking maybe it is not their problems. For me when I was in China, maybe I didn't care too much international students, other international students. Maybe I don't want to talk to them at first or I don't know how to actually talk to them...Actually when I was in my school, I didn't talk the international students because there are international students in my university, they are white students and some African students. I didn't talk to them before, maybe they feel lonely or somehow. I am now trying to consider the students' points. So that may not be their problem or the students' problem. My problem is just to find a way to start.

Annie tries to blame herself for the treatment that she gets from the majority students. She faults herself and remarks that if she had cared for international students when she was in her country, China that this would probably be happening to her. She tries to share in the blame that she is part of the reason for not having the majority students as friends.

Relating the importance of proper integration of international students in white colleges, Bueto recalls like Nita how necessary it is to interact with the majority students because of the pain of missing home and the love of the parents. There is that urge and the need that being in a mainly white university needs also to satisfy. The desire for home and the love of the parents among international students underscores the importance of helping international student to find a home in their new environment through proper interaction with the majority or domestic students.

The most problem is that we are too far from home and the relationship of our father and mother is not too near to us. So, we need friends and companions to make our life so easy because when we go out to travel in America, if you have a native friend, it makes it easier.

Bueto's statement becomes a serious appeal from international students stating the importance of friendly relationship with the majority students. This statement underscores the importance international students attach to integration with the majority students. Integration of foreign students will "make our life so easy" because "we are too far from home and the relationship of our father and mother is not too near to us."

Outside of social problems and challenges, international students also face challenges in the classroom. Luuna gives an insight of the challenges international students face in the lecture room. She clearly remarks that studying in a predominantly white institution is definitely not easy. "It was definitely a challenge. Especially like the course in my department, they were based on the American culture" She comments of the difficulty of attending a lecture where it is hard to follow the lecture due to the cultural differences. She narrates what goes on in one of her lecture classes;

The teacher was talking based on the past year like those advertising campaigns Americans have been exposed to...I mean the teacher was like for example, the coca-cola came in the 1990's. I was at China at that time and so I did not understand what the teacher wanted to say or involve us with. That was the problem for me...The courses I learned were very local. They are things I have never learnt before.

Luuna's statement underlines the fact that studying in a different culture has its challenges and as such can be very difficult. Luuna also discusses the challenges of undertaking graduate studies in an entirely new discipline. This challenge can be compound when this is done in a new and different culture. Using herself as an example, she states, "and besides my undergraduate major is English, not advertizing. They were not related so I had no experience, I had no background information. So, it was quite hard for me to get adapted." Annie like Luuna relates how hard it is to adapt to the teaching system in this predominantly white university. She observes that the method of teaching in the United States and China are different. "I think it is a little bit hard for the teaching style that is a very big difference between US and China." She notes that she tries her best "to get used to the American class and to understand what the teacher teaches about and to know what the teacher's teaching style is." In talking about the academic challenges of the international students, Annie comments that "I think some international students are shy, if the teacher didn't ask me, I will not answer maybe I have some questions and I am shy to ask it." The shyness to talk in class may rise out of fear that the international students have. They may not want to be seen or rated as not intelligent. This can be seen in the advice Luuna's friend who is studying Physics gave her. Luuna retells of the advice, "...my friend...he is in the Physics department, he said that even if I could not understand the teacher but can still do the homework and test really well..." Thus, as a result of what the pass through international students who have been longer in the

university coached new international students on how to survive in the predominantly white university. They advise that even if you are not able to understand the lecture and the lecturer, what matters is to “do the homework and test really well.” This, of course, will be hard for many international students especially in certain disciplines where there is the need to understand the lecture and the teacher very well. Hence, Luuna, who is in Advertising remarks, “So that is the difference between art students and the science students.”

Ceene also narrates how hard it is to be adapted to the university environment in a predominantly white majority institution. She confides that as an international student her “language and character and friendship and everything changed, all these things changed.” She relates her experiences in the lecture room; “all the classmates are Americans and in a group discussion you feel that you have to be involved, totally involved...but it is hard for you to express your ideas clearly like because it is not your mother tongue.” Ceene continues:

I think there is one problem because our department does not have many international students as other departments in the college. So, sometimes I think that the teachers and professors do not notice that there are international students that cannot follow their speed of speech.

It is very possible that the majority students and some of the professors do not know that their speed of speech can enhance or impede the comprehension of international students in their class. Thus, Ceene remarks that her inability to follow the speed of the lecturers in class makes it hard for her to adapt to the new environment. She further notes; “if I do not know how to do an assignment or understand and I cannot find any other Chinese student to help me, I have to deal with all the problems by myself.” Ceene believes that

the problem of battling with the assignments alone is a crisis and dilemma for many international students. She states that this experience “is the same for all the international students. It is not about race or about your color or skin but it is for all international students.” Annie confirmed Ceene’s statement when she commented, “I think it was so lonely when I walk in the campus but you know we have to solve all the problems by ourselves...It is a little bad because we do not have projects to do together.”

Luuna discusses the differences in the academic culture in China and that of the United States. She relates a particular example of what happens in the lecture room in China. She notes that it is stricter the way the students are expected to behave. It requires that students give more respect to the professor.

For example, in the classroom in China we should be really, really be respectful to the teacher. We cannot like to say what you want to say without raising your hand; you should raise your hand first and should not be late at class. If you are late, you stand at the back of the classroom and for the whole class and we cannot eat and we cannot drink. But here in America, it is so leisure, so relaxed. I mean you can come in and you say your questions whenever you want and the professor will accept that...The Chinese University was very strict.

In this statement, Luuna makes an allusion to the relaxed atmosphere found in the United States which is already a credit to the American higher education. It is considered that creating a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom encourages comprehension among students. Thus, studying in a relaxed atmosphere and environment enables the students to discuss their ideas freely with the lecturers. This will surely enable the students to learn better because they are able to interact with the teacher freely and cordially. This may be the reason behind the success of American higher education and, of course, one of the reasons international students come to the United States to study. However, Luuna



comments that there are a lot of group projects in the predominantly white university and as such she is not able to follow the speed of the majority students in their group discussions.

And the other thing is that we have a lot of group projects that is the thing we don't have in China... And I feel a hard time to really participate in those. Sometimes when I want to express my idea, they move to another topic because they are talking too fast and they are like so that is the problem.

Doing projects may not be bad in itself, but the way it is handled may be very frustrating to international students who are not used to it as a means of learning. Annie discusses in her own view what makes projects very challenging. Contrary to Luuna who is not allowed to express her ideas in a group project, Annie laments of the loneliness of doing projects alone as an international student. She narrates her experience, "I think it was so lonely when I walk in the campus but you know we have to solve all the problems by ourselves so although there are so many international students here, Chinese students here, but it is so lonely from my house." She notes that there is no opportunity created for her to interact with the majority students outside the class and lecture time. She remarks, "It is a little bad because we do not have projects to do together. There is no time for us; make a chance for us to do so." Thus, while Luuna is not allowed to express her ideas in her group project, Annie decries doing projects alone. This is the challenge.

Annie further compares the differences in academics in China and in the United States:

There are differences between economics in China and US. In China teachers always use another way to teach economics. They always teach some concepts and practice about economics, they didn't teach much

about the economic analysis. In America they focus on economics and analysis and about Mathematics or something and it is a little bit hard for me to follow that.

It is therefore a serious hurdle when someone leaves their country to study abroad and the situation becomes so challenging. Annie expresses the distress and distraught of not following the teacher because of the differences in the system of academic orientation and teaching method. This supports Luuna's earlier statement that the courses she was taught in advertising "were local" which she had not learned before and as such a problem for her to comprehend.

Jinny, a U.S citizen who grew up in South Africa, compares life in South Africa and the life in the American white predominantly universities she has attended. Jinny remarks:

The Southern Africa as I knew it separate from any political or religious advertent was a very profoundly simplistic life and a good way, a very real life...The kind of order and structure just seemly not there but I am sure it was a different order, it's very natural to me to say we don't need all this structured order and yet in our society we have it and so I just try to fit in, but I know that with most instructors, I am a square peg in a round hole.

This statement where Jinny sees herself as "a square peg in a round hole" seems to be how majority of the international students feel about themselves which can make life very depressing. Though an American, Jinny describes how being raised in another part of the world has impact her academic life. Describing the effect being raised in another part of the world has made in her academic life, Jinny remarks, "I grew up as a global nomad. I didn't grow up to be South African; I didn't grow up to be American. I grew up to be between cultures." She notes that her upbringing has such strong impact on her in

her academic relations with some professors “because they don’t realize that the students have a different background.” Jinny confided:

I think my background does have an influence because like I said there is something, I think it is not just Southern Africa but it is in many places in Africa but I can only speak for Southern African where this linear way of thinking that A must lead to B and must lead to C and to D, uhm, it was not the way I learnt to think, it was not the way that I learnt to write and so it was not the way that I learnt to speak. So all this background that I have influences me when someone asks me a question verbally or when I write an answer...If I am talking to a professor or I am writing an essay, the fact that they wanted it to be so much information in such a small place because they wanted every point to be tied to the next one and that goes against the part of me that feels African. It feels like my African way of thinking is a constant struggle in an American environment.

The above statement actually makes the point that there are different influences impacted on individuals depending on where they were raised. This also implies that there are a whole different ways of thinking in different contexts and this can make it difficult to learn in this new context and in the way of the new context. Thus, different environments impact individuals differently. Jinny supports her perceptions with a story. She comments, “I have one professor who is pretty much aware of what was happening because she is a cross cultural researcher and a cross cultural expert. I can compare and contrast the way she worked with me to the way another professor worked with me.” In this example, Jinny highlights the importance of the influence of background orientation and upbringing on international students. The professor who is “a cross-cultural researcher” was able to discover this difference. Thus, Jinny’s experience may be the experience of a multitude of international students who may not be able to know where and how to begin in a culture that is very different.

Jinny, therefore, has narrated how growing up in different cultural orientations can affect international students in their ability to learn. She, however, has given a suggestion of how they can as well be ministered to; through getting professors have a “cross-cultural” mentality. The next theme discusses what international students suffer on account of lack of cultural orientations by the people they have met or the people they have come in contact with. The effects of cultural differences can be so imposing, intimidating, and very frustrating to international students. They shared some of these concerns with me. Their experiences and concerns form the new theme. These experiences are what I will discuss in this new theme.

### *Cultural differences have strong effects*

It is a non-debatable fact that differences in culture exist between the international students and the majority students. The experiences of international students in the predominantly white institution show the prominence of culture and the role it plays in all the challenges these foreign students undergo in their new environment. It is either the influence of American culture acting on their actions or the culture of their native countries bearing on their actions. It therefore becomes necessary to discuss the prominent place of culture on international students. Cottis relates how he is afraid to relate and interact well with the majority students.

I don't talk to them (American students) because I am afraid that they will think that I will abuse them. I have this concern that they will feel that you will abuse them. I feel afraid of them...In China, I don't have this concern.

Though this particular participant felt uncomfortable with this statement upon reflection and changed it when the transcribed script was sent to him, nonetheless, the above

statement shows the extent many international students feel uncomfortable when they interact with the majority students. This particular concern is as a result of cultural differences. Cottis tries to relate how a cultural difference impacts his action. He further relates that he is afraid to interact with the majority students because “maybe some words I cannot use efficiently... Sometimes, I don’t know what to say.” Cottis explains that he did not have this concern in China but here “I have this concern and sometimes may be, I don’t know what to say, I don’t know what to say when I talk to them.” Thus, a lot of his fears and concerns boil down to the strong effect of language differences. Cottis is not the only international student witnessing this conflict, confusion and distress. Other international students confront similar problems.

Luuna narrates how the cultural differences impact her in the university. She stresses that she has not been able to adapt to the university system even though she is welcomed by the institution. She remarks that this is because she does not think she belongs “here” because she does not speak like an American.

It is just I do not belong here. Even if I speak good English, other people always say that, I really like American culture, I like American movie, I study American fashion all the time even when I was in China but I am not an American, I am not a white person. I am from China and I spent twenty years in China. That is my soul, my heart that is the whole body of me... I am afraid they won’t understand; I think we grew up in different environment.

Luuna statement brings out another perspective of the influence and impact of two cultures on her, her native culture which will not allow her to take her new environment as her place and the American culture that will not accept her as an American because she is “not a white person.” Luuna, of course, may not be the only international student with

this feeling of culture conflict. Like Cottis, Luuna's problem is also connected with the language problem, hence, she annotates, "...even if I speak good English" noting the fact that language is somewhat a problem. This still proves the strong effect of language differences on the international students. Jamarl also recounts his experiences and how he has been facing a lot of difficulties because he grew up a French speaking West African country. The language differences and problems cuts across every culture and therefore hits every international students as long as they not have the language of their new location or they are not able to speak with the same accent of the owners of the language.

I have been facing some troubles because I come from a French speaking country and it is not easy for the first time to come and be in the class. There are a lot of challenges going on... you know, and even the perception of some of the students... They might just think that maybe, you come from a country where education is not as structured as it is here.

Jamarl's observation also articulates the problem of the international student as it concerns language differences. Jamarl observes, "It is going to be challenging for an international student because whatever we might say, language might be a barrier in my case." Jamarl also bring out another salient point where the majority students and probably the professors look at the international student and rate the person's intelligence or the country's educational system on the international student's ability to speak their language. The importance of language in a culture has made it a core influence in any interaction between people from different cultures. As the international students relate, because many of them do not have the language skills of their new environment, it has so much affected their lives that they feel other cultural impacts and problems because they do not have the grips and skills of the language of their landlords, the predominantly

white university where they study. Language differences and the inability to communicate effectively have impacted international students in other perspectives.

Ceene believes that there is the problem of discrimination and inequality which has their own tolls on the performance of international students in the predominantly white university. Ceene feels discriminated as a result of the differences she felt in the culture the predominantly white university culture. She came to the conclusion because she feels that international students are treated as second class citizen because they do not speak English with the American accent.

As a human being, I have a right like the majority people (students) and then the majority students should understand that the international students are not second class citizens. It is unfair. I mean, if you are international student, no matter whether you are white or black or yellow, if you speak English, they can know that you are an international student and a foreigner and then one time you become a minority. And to be honest, I don't think that this discrimination can be curbed.

According to Ceene, merely speaking the language does not guarantee that an individual is free from being discriminated against. One has to speak the language as the owners. She narrates, "...if you speak English, they can know that you are an international student and a foreigner and then one time you become a minority." She relates how discrimination can adversely affect or influence the teacher in his dealings with international students:

I mean personally I believe every person has their own view about people. The teachers can treat you fair in the class and they promise that he can treat you fair and really fair but after the class, you do not know whether the score that the teacher gave you is all based on your writing or a little bit based on your color but that is my opinion.

The result of discrimination can be very demoralizing and discouraging. Ceene shares her concerns and how such experience which could play in with the language problem wanted to frustrate her and how she eventually decided to trust herself.

I mean after time past I still feel self frustrated because it is like I work more hard like others but I still get the same score, the same grade. After, I calmed down myself that it is okay that you are not born English but are born Chinese. It is okay, you have come here for one year or two years and you cannot speak as on the same level as they are born here. I have decided to have self confidence and to trust myself.

Ceene feels that her language and the way she presents her material for the teacher affects her performance and outcome in term of grades. She does not know what to do about it that to accept as it is. This can be very frustrating and depressing but there is nothing she can do about it and there is no where she can go to prove what she knows than what she has written which the teacher had graded. Ceene is not the only international student to feel discrimination.

Jinny's experience confirms Ceene's observation that international students may stand undergo discrimination at some time in their educational career in a predominantly white university. Jinny remarks that a professor gave her a failing grade on the relevance of the topic she wrote for presentation because it was a "cross cultural work" which every other person's work "was very mono-cultural and white." She notes, "That to me felt like bias." Jinny discussed the possibility of a professor being biased because of the student's cultural background.

I think it could be true for other international students, yes, because English is my native language...I have a lot more confidence that say my Chinese friends. So I probably bring things up what they would not bring up because they don't feel comfortable speaking English.



Jinny notes that she does not see “formal university processes in place to help instructors relate to a broader background of cultural experience.” Thus, Jinny compares how difficult it could be for international students who do not have the language skill to escape discrimination. She notes that it needs courage and “confidence” to confront acts on discrimination. She remarks that was able to bring such act of discrimination up because “English is my native language.”

Annie took time to narrate her ordeal in not finding a students’ job in the school which she considered was because of discrimination or at least a prejudice.

I am living in... (a predominantly white students’ hostel) so I applied for RA position in our resident hall. I went for the interview, RA is a resident assistant...they said sorry...but I don’t know why but I think because maybe I am not a native, American people. They think just maybe the difference from culture, so sometimes, I think it is culture problem, I think language is not the problem and maybe they think that language is the problem and culture is the problem...I ask them what is the difference between an American student and an international student to apply for an RA position and they told me it depend on the building, which building? May be this building is for American people and... (Predominantly international students’ hostel) allows for international students... I think I will, excuse me, I will say whoa, we do not have the same starting level for that.

Though Annie was told that she could apply to the other hostel that accept international students for the Resident Assistant (RA), Annie felt that she was rejected from being an RA in the hostel where she lives because there is prejudice. She sees it as setting a double standard for selecting who should be an RA and where. Annie further observes that the challenges she passes through are not only peculiar to herself but also are applicable to other international students. She remarks; “I think it is true for most of the international students, I think they are so much for the people from Asia because our

first language is not English so they will think your language is a problem and something like that.” Annie narrates an experience a friend told her about how difficult it is even to find what she called “easy jobs.”

I think like the job of telephone receiver, my friend told me that to get that job is hard because as a time receiver you just have to get the phone and answer it but Americans, they don't think like that. You know we are not natives, they will tell you that you cannot speak well and we cannot give you that job. Okay, like our customers language, you cannot understand the questions for about three times. These are all easy jobs but most of the native people they can easily get that job but we cannot justify the big difference.

Unlike Ceene, who maintains that “if you are international student, no matter whether you are white or black or yellow” you are discriminated against once you are not able to speak with the American accent, the accent of the owner; Annie, on the other hand, sees the situation a little different for those whose first language is English. She comments:

I think that so much for the people of Asia because our first language is not English so they think your language is a problem and something like that. But a lot of students like Indian students; they have no problems in getting in. Their first language is English, they can speak very good.

Nonetheless, Annie bewails these differences and the problems of international students in a predominantly white college and says, “It is hard to think about the barrier.”

Apart from language problem that impacts international students, there are also other cultural orientations that influence the integration of international students in a predominantly white university. Recounting her challenges in studying in a predominantly white institution, Annie enumerates the ordeals in studying abroad and how she sometimes becomes home sick. Annie's home feeling brings out the influence and the impact the culture she was raised has on her. There is that cultural orientation that

Annie is so much attached to her family and loved ones and to be separated from them becomes so hard.

I have to cook for myself everyday and I have to buy everything and how to manage my time and how to solve all problems. It is a bit hard for me to stay here because; you know I am so far from my family. I have some friends from here, my Chinese friends but I am so busy that most of the time, I have to solve the problems myself and sometimes I am very home sick, you know that and so I feel so lonely and so that is the problem.

Annie is not the only international student whose cultural orientation makes her feel home sick. Other international students have also made allusions to the confronting situation of studying outside home. Bueto stresses how hard it is to be outside home. He states that “the most problem is that we are too far from home and the relationship of our father is not too near to us.” Nita also narrates her ordeal when she came newly:

I feel I am quite lonely and I am just alone here...I keep on complaining to my parents, oh here is very different from Malaysia and that I want to go back. Like the first one month am here, my parents asked me to come back to Malaysia and they just can't stand to see that I am suffering and it is like, because I talk to my mom everyday so she was like every day she on saying for two weeks just come back, just come back. And even my dad asked me to come back and after some time, my mom changed her mind and asked me to just stay there and my dad was like, ah you come back. Sometimes, they constantly quarrel because my dad asked me to come back but my mom asked me to stay.

This cultural orientation affects not only the international students but also their families. Nita narrates how her family was feeling her separation especially when she mentioned to them how she was suffering. The inability of the parents not agreeing on their determination of allowing Nita to come back brought about some misgivings in the family. Luuna make the direct reference of the influence of the cultural orientation to always stay with the family on her. In explaining why she still feels lonely in the

predominantly white university she narrates, “It is just I do not belong here...I am from China and I have spent twenty years in China. That is my soul, my heart that is my whole body for me. So it is hard to change.”

Jamarl also notes another impact of culture on international students. Like Jamarl, many other international students have noted how the difficulty it is of getting a Caucasian, a majority student as a friend. He annotates:

My problem is that in the way things are going. All my friends, all the people I know are people from Africa, international students, you know. I really ‘d like to discover more about the place, it is a pleasure to see someone with the same background...but yeah, I’d like to be here and live an experience that would be helpful to me in Africa, to know more about America, the American way of life, American people. That’s what I am going to be teaching back home; the American way of life, Civilization and civilization is also the way people live.

However, unlike other international students Jamarl brings up a prominent point and argues that the differences in color might be a possible reason why his interaction with the majority students has not flowed. Jamarl sees color differences as a cultural orientation that also impact both majority and international students. He notes that this can even affect international students’ academic potentials like the language problem. He recounts that as black he needed to work harder than other students in order to prove himself;

I think they are related, you’re black, you’re black. If you come in a country where there is a perception about black people, you don’t pretend not to be in the same situation, you know what I mean. Yeah, if you are a person of color, I have the impression that you need to prove, to show that I can make it, which might not be the case of someone, a Caucasian student...otherwise, it will be like, ‘yeah I can understand that he comes from Africa.’ It is natural that this kind of feeling comes.

Jamarl recounts that one does not only need to work hard to make impression in the lecture room but also has to discover that one country may play a role on the way one is treated by the majority students. He shares a story of his encounter with the majority students outside the class.

I remember something which is really, was really related to my coming from Africa... One day we had a talk and it was about gays, gay life and this kind of life, and it was here. I was really shocked because it was like I made a comment which I think the intention they had about the comment I think was related to the fact that I was African and I had to tell that to them... they say that there was a kind of marching and that everybody should go and join that movement and I said why should we join them. And we had a talk and I said that I believe that the norm in life is heterosexual life, now one of them said I should not say that, okay, but at that same moment, I discovered that they just stopped the discussion and usually we used to go back home together but that day, the two girls they just said bye. And they went and I said to myself, my God, is it because of what I have talked about? And on the following day when they came I just came in and didn't say 'hi' to any person. I just said okay, and one of the girls came to me and said, hei, why didn't you say 'hi' and I said, I didn't say 'hi' because of your reaction last time and that I believe that if I was an American, you would just tell me okay, don't say that, you should not say this, and this should be a discussion and you do not have a right to stop it there and go and she said, yeah, may be because you come from another country but normally in this country, when you are under 40 and so on, you have to be pro-gay etc. I said okay, I didn't know that by in any case I mean she had to; they had to listen and talk. It was a debate, but the only fact in this case is that this boy is from Africa and they didn't like that. And I told that to them and it is one of them we now have a good relation but not with the other... I don't really, in this specific case, I do not call it racism but here I think it was a kind of supremacist kind of belief because I'm sure they would not act like that with a white person.

In this long but sad encounter, Jamarl makes the case that he feels that if he was an American those majority students would not have behaved the way they did.

One of them made a reference to the fact that he is not from "this country,"

America. Though there is no guarantee that the majority students would behave exactly the way they did to Jamarl to an America, however, Jamarl was able to

see the influence of cultural differences in the action. He felt reaction of these girls who are majority students stem from the fact that he is African and a black person. Some of the international students who are not black also see themselves as students of color. Luuna, a Chinese student in the predominantly white university refers herself as a student of color when referring to why she still feels lonely. She remarks, "I am not an American, I am not a white people. I am from China." Thus, international students feel that their color and difference in color and place of origin impact their life in a foreign land. They feel the strong effects these cultural differences impose on them. Everything they do or that is done to them is perceived from this cultural perspective.

Furthermore, there is a belief among international students that they share the same fate and as such they see themselves as one irrespective of their different countries of origin. For instance, during my interview with Ceene, she saw me as an international student because I am from Africa even though I was enrolled in the school as an international student told me, "I mean because you are an international student, sometimes, you put yourself in my world. It is like my view can also describe your opinions about international student. Your source as mine is one." Though this statement relates open and relaxed Ceene was to the interview and the trust she reposes on me but it also supports the claims of Jamarl, Nita, Bueto, and Annie that international students make friends easily with their fellow international students than with the majority students. Nita recalls her hosting new international students and their reaction in have international students in their class and she explains:

Some of them will think that it is so scary because you do not have any international student in the class. International student does not mean a person from their own country but from all other countries. It is like if your class has at least one international student, you will feel more secure that in a class you are the only international student. They won't kill you but...

Other international students in their statements earlier on shared the fact that they have other international students as friends but not the majority students. Though they want to be friends with the majority friends, they feel protected have other friends as international friends. Luuna makes this point clear when explaining the insecurity international students feel. She notes, "I think we grew up in different environments... I will say we just hang out but for deep problems, I will not express it to them."

Another factor that distress international students in the predominantly white college like cultural orientation is the issue of assistantship. Though some of the international students have just come to see it as more of a norm that you do not get scholarships and assistantships in your master's program especially among students in arts humanities, they however, would like it if there is a way their different departments will offer them such assistantships. Ceene narrates her ordeal as an international student without an assistantship and notes that it is "hard to say." She continues, "It is like I still use my parent's money. I don't like it that way but Chinese parents are like if you are my child, I will continue to pay for you until you are able to go to school and fend for yourself."

Jinny who knows the influence of cultural orientations because she has been in the two worlds comments on the life of international students in a predominantly white

university remarks which is so much affected by the influences of cultural differences.

She remarks:

Honestly it must be hard for a person of who is mono-cultural American who is used to talking to only people in American accent and not used to listening to another accent or talking to someone who doesn't have strong English skills...I think it must be hard for both the student and the instructor to see what the student is capable of."

Jinny acknowledges the frustrations of international students as a result of cultural orientations and differences. She, however, notes it is not also easy for the "mono-cultural Americans," students and the professors alike. She encourages international student thus:

I suggest trying not to be afraid to use the English language. If somebody puts you down for it, it is hard to say, but it is their problem. It is not your problem because you tried to speak in this language that is not your own, ehm, and not to be afraid.

Thus, these experiences shared by these international students are experiences that they pass through every day and every moment. It marks their daily activities. These experiences are very challenging. The impact of differences in cultures like language, teaching methodology and technique, academics, as well as the impact of discrimination and race affect international students in their academic as well as social lives. The international students face all these problems alone. Some of these frustrations might be so intimidating, threatening, and shocking to them that will not be able to share it with the majority students or even with their best international friends. Hence, the implications of not attending to the challenges of these international students can be very disastrous.



The aim of this study which explores the experiences of international students in a predominantly white university is to offer necessarily suggestions that will lead to helping international students adapt and integrate into their new environment. The suggestions on how the international students can be helped to adapt to the predominantly white higher educational institution is what chapter 5 will discuss. Thus, chapter 5 which is the discussion will try to address the possible implications of not attending to the problems of international students and then offer possible suggestions that will remedy the frustrations of international students thereby enhancing their integration.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion**

A great number of international students come to study in white American universities every year and many of these students come on temporary students' visa (Shenoy, 2002; Skinner, 2002). There is an urgent need that these international students are integrated into the American culture and environment in order to ensure their persistence and success in their studies. This phenomenological qualitative study was conducted among eight international students who are in the United States with the sole purpose of gaining education. Some of these foreign students did not rule out the possibility of working in the United States after their graduation. The majority of these international students, who are not on scholarships and do not have assistantships, acknowledge that their parents pay their tuition from their respective countries (NAFSA: Association of International Educators, 2008).

Though the direct impact and effect of 9/11 was not the main focus of this study, international students knowingly or unknowingly, directly or indirectly live with the after effects of the September 11, 2001 attack on the American soil. Many of the international students know that the majority students do not have any interest in interacting with them. Some of these foreign students have already shared the feelings of being treated like second class citizens. There is the possibility that the discrimination of international students in a predominantly white university after the events of 9/11 may have a correlation with fear on the part of the majority students as a result of the action of the 9/11 perpetrators. It is possible that the international students are subjects of fear and

tension among the majority students as some of the perpetrators of the 9/11/2001 attacks were on temporary students' visas. Thus, this singular demeaning act of terrorism has cost the international students the affection, friendship, and sympathy of the majority students and university family.

There are, however, close relationships between some of the findings of the chapter 4 with the literature review in chapter 2. There are discoveries in chapter 2 of some of the problems menacing international students on study abroad program, which encompass international students outside the United States. Some of these problems include loneliness, homesickness, language problems, difficulty in making friends, finances, arrival confusion, depression, and employment problems (Grayson, 2008; Robertson, et al., 2000; Sawir, et al., 2008). These findings also enumerated a lot of the problems facing international students in the United States. There is therefore the need to explore and study these findings in order to discover the ways to enable international students to integrate into their new environment.

The findings of this study calls for the urgent need to consider the challenges of these international students. The experiences of these international students speak volumes of what it means to be in a new environment and what it means to be in a new culture. These experiences range from the challenges of a new educational structure to that of the language mastery; from the change in classroom decorum to the differences in teaching and learning approaches in the new place. Furthermore, the experiences of the international students expose the discovery of self differences, the perceived disparity and preferential treatments, the mistrust and cultural inattentiveness, socio-cultural individualistic life and the no respect for specialized status mentality. The international

students expressed shock in these discoveries and some of them came to the realization that they do not belong to the new culture. For these students to persist and be acclimatized to their new environment there is the need for proper and authentic integration.

The need for integration among international students brings out the relevance of Tinto's (1975) study, who argues the importance of integration of students in colleges. Tinto comments that integration encourages college persistence and success. The international students felt that their integration into the predominantly white higher educational institutions would help them belong and acclimatize into the American culture. Helping therefore these international students to adapt into American university will positively affect both the international students and the American society.

This chapter will address the findings of the interview of eight international students. It would try to interpret some of these challenges positing the implications of these challenges confronting the international students and proffer suggestions.

### **Summary of all findings**

The study of the experiences of international students in a primarily white college revealed the challenges of foreign students in the cultural American educational system. Few studies that treat international students existed (Lee & Rice, 2007; Mwaura, 2008; and Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland, & Ramia, 2007). Virtually none of these works treat and address the experiences of international students in a predominantly white university in the United States. This means that the experiences of international students in a predominantly white culture have not been given the full attention. The purpose of

this study was to explore the experiences of these international students in order to discover their challenges. Among others discoveries, the experiences of these foreign students reveal the challenge of the language mastery among international students. Ceene puts it succinctly, “if you are an international student no matter whether you are white or black or yellow, if you speak English, they can know that you are an international student and a foreigner and then one time you become a minority.” Even those whose official language was English had to battle with the American accent.

Furthermore, some international students are challenged by the discovery of the differences between themselves and their peers, the perceived disparity and preferential treatments, the mistrust and cultural inattentiveness, and socio-cultural individualistic life. There were instances where international students mentioned their struggle with loneliness and home sickness while others stated their struggle with differential and preferential treatments. These foreign students described situations where they were not given campus jobs because of their coming from another culture. Some others doubted the sincerity of some of their professors in giving them grades they truly deserve. Still more, some international students felt that they were not accepted into the mainstream family of the predominantly white university because of the coldness, non-welcoming and non-interested attitude of the majority students in the college. Some other international students discussed the challenges of a new educational structure and the change in classroom decorum that brought about the differences in teaching and learning approaches that characterized their new place. Thus, there is this relaxed, free nature kind of the classroom that increases teacher-student relationship and thus increases confidence and learning. Hence, this study explored and exposed how international students from

different countries battled and struggled with the problems of cultural differences both inside and outside the lecture rooms. Because some of these experiences and exposures were new to the foreign students, they had become challenges and hurdles to battle. Some of the participants used the word “shock” to express their feeling and others simply noted that they were thrown out by experiences that they felt that they “do not belong.”

The experiences of the international students from what they shared in the interview show that many of them have not fully integrated into the principally white university. Some of their challenges are pitiable and sympathetic. Despite these challenges, the international students continue to strive against the odds to study and do well in their academic work. Many of these international students continue to trust and hope that these problems will someday come to pass; hence, they continued to push on even though it is difficult. One of the international students, Luuna, said that she considered those majority students who did not have time to interact with the international students as “narrow minded.” For other international students, it was part of the culture they have found themselves and so they had to continue to live their lives and face their study.

Some international students noted the expectations their families had for them to succeed. Some of the families go to any extent to help their children succeed in their studies in the white colleges in the United States through financial assistance. Many of the parents pay their children’s tuition while others with some kind of psycho-educational therapy and treatment help their children to adapt and persist in college education in predominantly white universities in the United States. Nita, a former undergraduate student of actuary science who transferred to the predominantly white university in the

United States after spending two years in Malaysia, recounted how the parents supported her to change to advertising since that would help her adapt to the new environment. The expectations and the support of the parents of these international students serve as a moral courage that sustains them in the midst of adversity enabling them to overcome obstacles that naturally would seem insurmountable. The students saw the challenges facing them as stepping stones that would help them give in their best.

The Gambian poet, Peters, (1964) in his poem “We have come home” described the suffering and challenges of studying in a predominantly white culture as “bloodless wars.” The international students in predominantly white culture face the bloodless wars of many different cultures challenging their persistence and success. Peters (1964) recounted that the wars fought were “true massacre of the soul.” It was a “true massacre of the soul” because of the pains of frustration, loneliness, and nostalgic feeling of the foreign students’ homeland. Thus, Peters (1964) like Luuna and Jinny wondered “What does it cost to be loved and left alone” (Peter, L., 1964, in <http://www.cafeafricana.com/Poetry.html>). Peter (1964), once an international student in a predominantly white college captured the situations and feelings of today’s international students. Thus, the problems of international students in predominantly white universities seem to be an aged long problem. Just as Cottis noted, “I don’t talk to them (the majority students)” and Luuna confided “I am afraid that they won’t understand...for deep problems, I will not express it to them,” many international students tackle their problems silently without discussing them because of the fear that they might be misunderstood.

Furthermore, some international students encountered the challenge of passing their examinations in a language that was not their mother tongue. Jamarl notes, “so I have to make good result in order to continue with my program, to get As’ everywhere...they might just think that, may be, you come from a country where education is not as structured as it is here.” Even though some of the foreign students indicated that they feel that there might be a double standard used in judging their performance, they quietly took whatever grade they were given. Some of these international students studied without job opportunities since they knew that they would not get any job as a result of lingual-cultural complexities. Jinny, an American who was raised outside of America, captured the seemingly silence of the foreign students in situations they did not have the moral strength to challenge; “I have a whole lot more confidence than say my Chinese friends. So, I probably bring things up that they would not bring up because they don’t feel comfortable...” Some of the international students would simply console themselves that they are not part of the majority students and as such would not have to confront their situation. Ceene noted:

After time passed I still feel frustrated because it is like I work more hard like others but I still get the same score, the same grade. After I calmed down myself that it is okay that you are not born English but you are born Chinese...I have decide to have self confidence and to trust myself.

These international students struggle to pass the examinations despite the challenges that confront them.

Still more, many of the international students were faced with their own personal expectations and the expectations of their friends to succeed in the predominantly white university. These transnational students took it upon themselves to struggle to make sure



that they succeeded. They would not like to be failures and would not like their friends to see them as failures. They took every measure and worked against all odds to succeed in the university that is predominantly white. On the contrary, some other international students were not able to finish their educational career in the predominantly white university because of the challenges which some of the foreign students thought that were insurmountable. Some international students suggested that they did not belong to the family of the majority students who were mainly whites and as such they quitted or continued to transfer from one university to another.

It becomes important, therefore, that the challenges of the international students is known through sharing their experiences. This will enable us to be an awareness of what their challenges are and then find out possible ways of helping them. The collaborative attitude of the majority students and the staff will not only help the international students to integrate but also enable them to persist in the predominantly white university.

### **Implications**

The findings of the challenges facing the international students in a predominantly white institution confronts this work to suggest how these problems can be solved or at least be reduced in order to help international students integrate into the predominantly white university. Because most of the international students do not have scholarships, it will be a good step toward helping the international students if the schools or departments will be able to make more scholarships available for international students. Most of the international students who do not have scholarships look for jobs. Granting them more scholarships will help them in their academics in the sense that they will be able to

concentrate on their studies. If the parents of these international students continue to pay for their tuition from their home countries, it would be difficult to break the tie and bond that exist between these international students with the families in their home countries. This bond may continue to be distractions for international children. Furthermore, the constant interaction of the international students with their parents at their home country may not only be an opportunity for these international students to share their feelings and challenges with their parents; it may evoke the sympathy and support of the family. This sense of support from the family may be clouded with some reactions or actions that may not be welcome to the United State. Though we may not say that this is the case with the 9/11 episode, such eventualities have to be guided in order not to occur again. Thus, if the international students are so committed to their studies because they have financial assistance, they may not have time to be on the phone all the time calling their families back home. Furthermore, they may also come to appreciate few challenges that come to them as part of the challenges that go with the higher education.

I have found the suggestion given by Jinny of how international students could be helped to get assistantship to be important here. She noted:

I think it makes a big difference how the department responds. If the department says “hey, you know what, we would like to use you as a teaching assistant, but we feel that we need to help you with some English skills first,” or “we would like to help you with some English skills while you are being a teaching assistant. You know there are a lot of different options but let us talk about the whole package instead of just saying, “He can’t be. Put him aside, he’s under the table, he’s not worth being an assistant.”

I think the international students should be allowed to see what is available and the criteria for granting assistantship. This will enable the international students to know what is available and how they can get assistantship for their graduate studies.

Again, I suggest that in granting assistantships and scholarships to international students, many factors should be taken into consideration. Though the international students have come from different countries, it is important to note that they are not given even equal exposures. Some of these international students came from a very rich background, and they were exposed early in life to the Western culture and language. As such some of these international students from rich parents were prepared for overseas studies early in life. The intention of the parents may be such their children come back after studies to take over the establishments of the parents or the governmental positions of the parents which are already seen as the family patrimony. On the other hand, there are these individuals who have managed to get to overseas to study in order to make a better future and life. These people came from poor families and were so much disadvantaged. They struggle to come over and continue to struggle amidst all the challenges of studying in a predominantly white institution. Some of these students go out with the lowest grades possible because they are not able to gain scholarship to assist them in their study amidst other challenges they face. This can be very frustrating and infuriating.

Furthermore, as Annie rightly observed, there is need to work on the program that links the international students to the majority students to enable them to blend together. Either the group is increased or the link friends be alternated once in a while to enable

some international students to have a taste of the different characters of different students. This may help dispel some bias between both groups.

Another suggestion is for the predominantly white university to have a kind of foster families group. This existence of these family groups will enable families to pick international students once they arrive for studies at predominantly white universities so that they begin to get themselves acclimatized being in a foreign, white culture. In one of her works on African American students, Winkle-Wagner (2009) suggested the idea of developing a program that may encourage and include foster parents and families. This suggestion will definitely be of great help for international students. Because these newly admitted international students will be launched into the majority white institution, it will be of great help if these new international students are to live with white foster parents and families. This will enable the foreign students adapt to the culture of the majority white before they are introduced into the dominated white school system and lecture rooms. This exposure will enable the students to be relaxed like the majority students and be attuned to the white culture easily. This program will also enable the foreign students to overcome their fears and the excess longing for home knowing that there are people living with them here who are interested in them, love them and care for them.

Furthermore, the faculty has to be encouraged to take note of the different cultures that exist in their classrooms and look for the best possible ways to help these foreign students to adapt where possible. It may not be possible to accommodate every culture in a class; it will, however, be a great idea if at the beginning of the semester the faculty member or professor acknowledges the different cultures, countries, and languages represented in their lecture room. This may add to the confidence of the students. It will

also be a great idea if the lecturer notes that though not all the students have English as their official language but that it is great that the students concerned have learned enough English to enable them to study in a predominantly white institution in the United States. This statement may not only encourage the international students but challenge them on what awaits them, namely, the academic workload and that they are to undertake their higher educational studies in a language approved by the institution.

Additionally, the majority students also coming to the higher educational institution for the first time need to be given some orientation and drilled on the fact that though the institution is a predominantly white higher education, it also accommodates many international students. The majority students need to be schooled to understand that the international students are from another culture quite different from their culture. Hence, they will be encouraged to interact with the international students to discover what cultural differences they have. This will definitely help the whole student body interact and blend. Furthermore, the students even though they have to maintain independence in their thoughts and writing should be made to understand that the international students are not business competitors who should be outdone as rivals, rather the international students should be presented as collaborators in the search and quest for knowledge. These explanations will help international students adapt to the primarily white institution. Collaboration will help dispose the international students to adapt and study knowing that they are welcome in the universal predominantly white university interested in the supreme quest for the knowledge that will serve to better the world.

There is the need to get the international students to know not only the school but the town they live in order to discover places that are not too safe. Just as Jamarl noted that when he was in London it was easy for him to know places that were not safe. He stated “it didn’t take long when I came to UK; I came to discover quickly places that were dangerous, etc. but here I can’t actually know.” The implication of not knowing where is bad and not secure for the students is the experience of Bueto who almost lost his life going for a bicycle ride in the evening.

Some of the international students talked about how projects were not a norm for them. Luuna, one of the international students reacted to the problem of the project thus; “And the other thing is that we have a lot of group projects that is the thing we don’t have in China...And I feel a hard time to really participate in those.” Another international student, Annie made her comment regarding projects; “It is a little bad because we do not have projects to do together.” I think the international students can be helped to do the projects either as individuals or as a group if the lecture addresses the importance of project and condemns that hijacking of assignments or the danger of being too exclusive.

There is also this problem of the international students seeing themselves as what the teacher cannot just manage. This can make the international students close their minds to learning and to knowledge. Jinny puts it thus, “I know that with most instructors, I am a square peg in a round hole.” Thus, for Jinny, she could not just fit in into the expectation of the instructor. She is therefore at the mercy of the instructor.

Furthermore, Jinny struck an important point when she mentioned battling with the way of thinking in her new place because of the way she was raised to think. Culture

so much configures us into who we are. The cultures we are raised influence our lives and thought pattern. Some of these international students come over to study in the United States with the way they think. Even in their writings, some of the international students had to think in their native language and then transliterate their thought into English, which sometimes do not rhyme with the standard spoken English. At other times, the way they reason will either be too slow, fast, or outdated that they may not be taken seriously. This is a serious problem for the international students as Jinny observed, “It feels like my African way of thinking is a constant struggle in an American environment.” The university management should try and look for a way to accommodate international students that are in this serious situation. There will no harm in helping them take some courses or classes that will help them in thinking construction or writing. At first it may seem challenging to the international students and money consuming to the institution, but in the long run, the university will be proud to produce scholars of caliber and the students will remain every grateful to their institutions.

### **Future Research**

The need for integration of international students in primarily white colleges makes it imperative for further researches in areas that have not been explored in order to find ways to enable international students adapt into the higher educational environment that is predominantly white. After studying the experiences of international students, nothing becomes so fascinating than to engage in a further research to discover means to help international students adapt to their new environment. I believe further research is necessary to discover whether international students in other predominantly white colleges have the same experiences shared by the international students of this higher

educational institution that is mainly white. Such research will also help to clarify what the international students experience in other higher institutions of education that are primarily white.

Furthermore, there should also be some quantitative studies of the experiences of international students in white colleges. The results should be tallied with the qualitative studies to enable researchers generalize the challenges of international students struggle in chiefly white dominated colleges. More research should also be done on men who are international students to discover if they share the same experiences with international students who are women. This is important because it seems more women are willing to share their experiences in dominated white colleges than men (Johnson, Kuykendall III, & Winkle-Wagner, 2009, p. 58).

In addition, there is the need to find out if international students from different countries and regions feel the same way in a predominantly white higher educational institution. Thus, more research should be carried out in this regard. If I had interviewed students for instance, from Korea, North Africa, or Europe, would they have revealed the same experiences as the students I interviewed. More researches are to be directed towards these areas.

There is also the need for further research to find out if international students from the countries where English is the official language face the same challenge as international students whose official language is not English. Therefore, further researches will enable researchers to find the best way to help international students adapt and integrate into their respective foreign colleges.



As an African reflecting on my research work, I feel it would be very interesting if studies could be carried out on American students studying in Africa. Since there is a saying that relationships are based on commonalities, I would like to see if American students in black African majority schools would have the same experiences like African students in predominantly white university. The import of the invincible force of the commonality based relationship seems to be responsible for the actions of the majority students towards international students. Though this has not been scientifically proved, but research on this area may expose the truth of the statement. This calls for an elaborate study given the fact that African race and culture seem quite different from the American culture. In the traditional African culture, an individual becomes relevant within their family and community. A person is only relevant and important in relation to other persons. Mbiti (1969) makes this clearer in these words:

Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say: "I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am." This is a cardinal point in the understanding of the African view of man (p. 109).

I think it would be interesting exploring the experience of an American white student in a predominant black African college.

### **Conclusion**

This study of the experiences of international students in a predominantly white institution has come to answer Tinto's (1975, 1987) question for proper integration. Tinto advocates that for a student to persist and succeed in the higher institutions that the student has to be properly integrated. By this Tinto (1975, 1987) argues that the student has to adapt to the new environment academically and socially. These two principles are

important since for a student to adapt to one without the other will definitely affect the student. This has come to be the case with the international students.

The international students shared their academic and social experiences and they are really challenging. Helping these international students to fit in well into the academic and social culture of the predominantly white institution of higher education will increase their persistence and success. Thus, proper integration of international students in a predominantly white university is important as it will enhance the retention rate of international students. The integration of international students into their respective institutions of higher education seems to be the key to maintaining an active and yet peaceful institution free from tensions, frustrations, and apprehensive incidents.

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## **Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Approval Letter**

### **Appendix B: Informed Consent**

### **Appendix C: Demographic Questions**

### **Appendix D: Sample of Data Analysis**

**Message**

\* Indicates Required Fields

[Printer Friendly Version](#)

**Sent By:** IRB NUgrant System

**Sent On:** 11/11/2009 09:36 pm

**Reference:** IRBNewProjectForm - 10297

**Subject:** Official Approval Letter for IRB project #10297

**Message:** November 5, 2009

Lawrence Ejiofo  
Department of Educational Administration  
580 I St David City, NE 68632

Rachelle Winkle Wagner  
Department of Educational Administration  
117 TEAC UNL 68588-0360

IRB Number: 20091110297 EX  
Project ID: 10297  
Project Title: The Experience of International Students in Predominantly White Universities

Dear Lawrence:

This letter is to officially notify you of the approval of your project by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. It is the Board's opinion that you have provided adequate safeguards for the rights and welfare of the participants in this study based on the information provided. Your proposal is in compliance with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance 00002258 and the DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46) and has been classified as exempt.

You are authorized to implement this study as of the Date of Final Approval: 11/05/2009. This approval is Valid Until: 07/15/2010.

1. The approved informed consent form has been uploaded to NUgrant (Ejiofo ICF-Approved.pdf). Please use this form to distribute to participants. If you need to make changes to the informed consent form, please submit the revised form to the IRB for review and approval prior to using it.

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:

- Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
- Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;

- Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;
- Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or
- Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

This project should be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the IRB Guidelines and you should notify the IRB immediately of any proposed changes that may affect the exempt status of your research project. You should report any unanticipated problems involving risks to the participants or others to the Board.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 472-6965.

Sincerely,



Mario Scalora, Ph.D.  
Chair for the IRB



Close

**Attachments:** No Data





## **Informed Consent – Individual Interview**

### **Identification of Project:**

The Experiences of International Students in predominantly White Universities

### **Purpose of Research:**

The purpose of this qualitative research study is to explore the experiences of international students in predominantly White universities. The project will help to identify problems that hinder international students from integrating into predominantly White universities. Participants will be 19 years or older and will have to be international students of a predominantly White university, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

### **Procedures:**

If you choose to become involved, you will be asked to be involved in an interview lasting approximately 60-90 minutes. You will be informed that the interview will be audio taped with your permission. The interviews will take place at an agreed upon location on the UNL campus. You will also be asked to complete a short demographic questionnaire to learn more about your background.

### **Risks and/or Discomforts:**

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this study.

### **Benefits:**

The findings of this study will be used to provide insight into ways to better serve international students and minority students in predominantly White universities. There may be policy or program recommendation that stem from this study, aimed at better supporting international students in predominantly White universities.

### **Confidentiality:**

All personal information will be kept confidential. Any materials with your name or personal information or audio-taped data will be stored in a lock file cabinet in the researcher's office. You will be asked to identify a pseudonym that will be utilized in the reporting of the study including any publications or presentations. If you desire, a pseudonym will also be used for the institution from which you are a student. The information gathered in this study may be published in professional journals or in a book manuscript. Identifying information for participants will not be available in any reporting of the data as the report will be from aggregated data.



IRB# 20091110297 EX  
Date Approved: 11/05/2009  
Valid Until: 07/15/2010



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES  
Department of Educational Administration

**Opportunity to ask questions:**

You have the right to ask any questions pertaining to this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate or continuing participation in the study. You may call the researcher at 308-340-1654 or e-mail ejiofolaw@yahoo.com with questions. You can also call Dr. Rachelle Winkle-Wagner at 402- 472-2380 or e-mail rwinkle-wagner2@unlnotes.unl.edu. If you have any questions about being a research participant or wish to report any concerns, please contact the UNL Institutional Review Board at 402-472-6965.

**Freedom to withdraw:**

You have the right to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time during the study without affecting your relationship with the researcher or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

**Consent to receive a copy:**

You are voluntarily making a decision to participate or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate, having read and understood the information presented. You will receive a copy of this consent form to keep.

\_\_\_\_\_ Check if you agree to be audio taped during the interview

Signature of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Name and Contact Information of the Researcher:**

Lawrence Olivia C Ejiofo, Principle Researcher  
Email: ejiofolaw@yahoo.com  
Phone: 308-340-1654

**Contact Information of the Institutional Review Board:**

Research Compliance Services  
Alexander Building West  
312 N. 14<sup>th</sup> St.  
Lincoln, NE 68588-0408  
Phone: 402-472-6965

### Demographic Questions

Participants Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Pseudonym: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewed by: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

University: \_\_\_\_\_

Major: \_\_\_\_\_

Department/Major \_\_\_\_\_

Years in College: \_\_\_\_\_

Education (Degrees/School): \_\_\_\_\_

In what capacity are you enrolled in the University: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you previously been employed / where: \_\_\_\_\_

Job Titles: \_\_\_\_\_

Professional Organizations: \_\_\_\_\_

Awards/Honors: \_\_\_\_\_

Marital Status: \_\_\_\_\_ # of Children \_\_\_\_\_

Hobbies/Interests: \_\_\_\_\_

Self Description: \_\_\_\_\_

## Sample of Data Analysis

So was it hard for you to adjust and integrate into this environment?

Bueto: No. I don't think I am a part of this school. I feel good and my life is just, I think a little chance to connect with friends and make friends with America or others.

Data Analysis:

Code: I don't think I am part of this school

Annie: I think it is a little bit hard for the teaching style, that is a very big difference between US and China, so to try my best to get used to the American class and to understand what the teacher teaches about and to know what the teacher's teaching style is and the other is to communicate with all the different peoples, the American people. I have to know how to communicate with them and be friends with them and other international students and or the life in America. You know, I have to cook for myself everyday and I have to buy everything and how to manage my time and how to solve all problems. It is a little bit hard for me to stay here because, you know I am so far from my family, my. I have some friends here, my Chinese friends but I am so busy so most of the time I have to solve the problems myself and sometimes I am very home sick, you know that and so I feel so lonely and so that is another problem.

Data Analysis:

Code: I think it is bit hard for the teaching style.  
It is a little bit hard for me to stay here.  
I am so far from my family.  
I am home sick.  
I feel so lonely.

Ceene: It think so, may be at the beginning no, but now I think I am. Because when I first came here, you know, I am an international student and my language and character, friendship and everything changed, all these things changed and I just felt uncomfortable here and frustrated but then I think when time past my English improved and I got used to how to study here and how to adapt to the teaching system and the learning system here may be now but not exactly, you know, we are still foreigners here.

Data Analysis:

Code: I am an international student and my language and character, friendship, and everything changed, all these things changed.

I just felt uncomfortable here and frustrated.

You know, we are still foreigners here.

Jamarl: I think that I am still in the process because, I mean, regarding the purely academic environment it is fine. I think there are some guidelines which enable us to adapt but socially speaking, I mean there are still some problems and you know, for example, just a case, ehm, I have to go to San Francisco on next Thursday, I still don't have someone to give me a ride, you know, I don't have a car. It is not that easy. I have a Fulbright seminar. It is not that easy and basically we are here to improve our English. Apart from course works, the classes, you don't have the opportunity to meet new people. Here in the school everybody is busy, it is not easy to make new friends. I have friends but most of them are international students, which mean that you don't learn much from them as far as the language is concerned. Socially speaking there might still be some problems, yeah.

Data Analysis:

Code: I think that I am still in the process.

Socially speaking, I mean there are still some problems.

For example, just a case, ehm, I have to go to San Francisco on next Thursday, I still don't have someone to give me a ride, you know, I don't have a car.

It is not easy. You don't have the opportunity to meet new people.

It is not easy to make new friends.

Socially speaking there might still be some problems.

Nita: Ahm, it is quite hard because in my first semester it was I was reluctant to get out of it. It was like I was grumbling, keep on complaining about everything. But after that I was like thinking oh no I would not like to stay in this situation like a year and like I just want to make it, I just want to enjoy here, enjoy the life here instead of keep on staying on my own world, keep on doing my own things, I keep on complaining. So I force myself like to mix up with people or talk to people, yeah, trying to get to know more people, try to communicate with others. I think it is hard when you make the first move because you keep wondering like oh what will others think about you or maybe they have their own friends, they may not have time for you. But I think after you have tried for a few times, you will surely get in. So, it is hard the first time.

Data Analysis:

Code: It is quite hard.

I was grumbling, keep complaining about everything.

I keep on complaining.

I think it was hard.

It is hard the first time.

Luuna: It was definitely a challenge. Especially like the course in my department, they were based on the American culture. Like those marketing and advertising, the teacher was talking based on the past year like those advertising campaigns Americans have been exposed to. I never lived in America, how could I know what you are talking about? I mean the teacher was like for example the coca-cola come in the 1990's. I was at

China at that time and so I did not understand what the teacher wanted to say or involve us with. That was a problem for me but my friend who has probably not good English skills, he is in the Physics department, he said that even if I could not understand the teacher but can still do the homework and test really well. So that is the difference between art students and the science students.

Data Analysis:

Code: It was definitely a challenge.

-Differences in courses.

Cottis: Ahm, maybe it is a language barrier and I think the most important thing is the language barrier and sometimes I cannot express my ideas very efficiently.

Data Analysis:

Code: It is a language barrier.

The most important thing is the language barrier.

Sometimes, I cannot express my ideas very efficiently.